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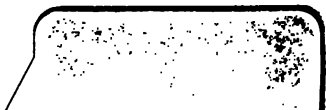
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THE
MISTY MORNING.

THE
MISTY MORNING.

A TALE.

The honest heart, that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However Fortune kick the ba',
Has aye some cause to smile.

Burns.

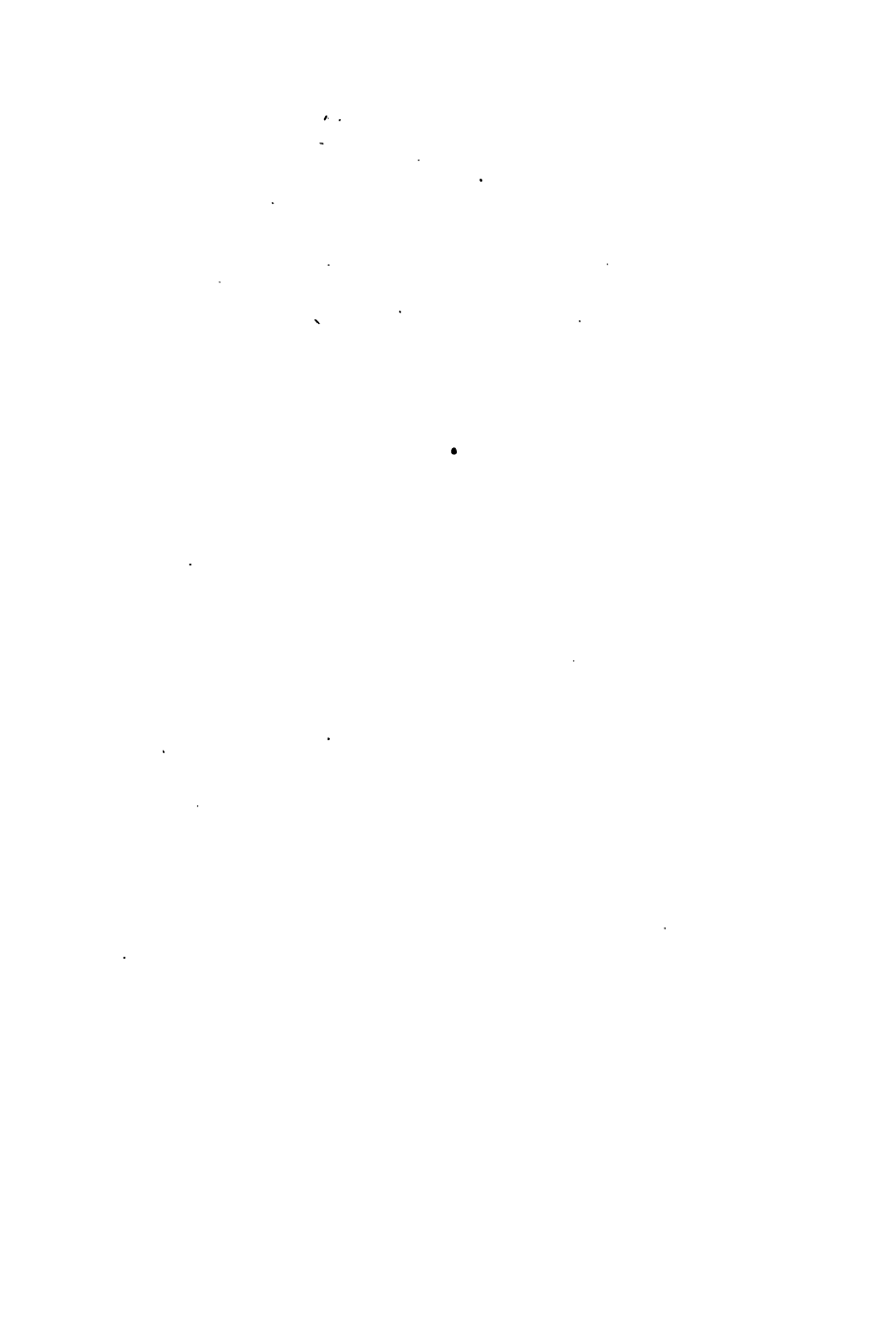
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THE MISTY MORNING.

CHAPTER I.

Your look and gestures frighten me!
If evil is afloat,
I'll bear the news whate'er they are,
So tell me on the spot.

"COME awa in bye, Mrs Curmuddie; the sicht o' you brichtens a body's dull, drumly life! But there's surely something extra queer i' the wind the day that's brocht you sae sune oot by yer or'nar. Come awa in-owre, woman, an' gie me the best o' yer news."

Such was the opening sentence that escaped Mrs Mysie Artichoke, one of the gossips of the village of Bramble-Green (in a parish which need not here be particularly named), on seeing her stately female friend, Mrs Kirsty Curmuddie, make her appearance rather earlier in the day than these two goddesses usually found opportunity of meeting, as they frequently did, to discuss the affairs and doings of all the people in and about the village, and to overhaul and comment upon whatever they considered worth turning over. There were but few occurrences, indeed, that ever took place among their neighbours which did not, to some extent or other, afford material for their criticism and remarks, and a great deal of time was often devoted to the above purposes by these two; and both being exceedingly addicted to the pastime, every convenient opportunity of enjoying each other's society was taken advantage of.

Each took great delight, and made special endeavours, to have every new event communicated as early as possible to her neighbour, it being, in their opinions, of very great importance to be the first bearer or communicator of any wonderful occurrence or piece of news which might be exciting notice; and the ambitious desire of superiority on this point generally kept both very sharply on the alert to learn every thing that might be going. Mrs Curmuddie, however, was rather the more notorious of the two; and her propensity for "burning her tongue in other people's broth," being known far and wide, had earned her the appellation of "Clashing Kirsty," by which name she was generally known. Her broad, cunning, inquisitive-looking face, was a perfect net for the entrapping of news, while her long Scotch tongue served admirably to dispense them again to the best possible advantage.

Though Mrs Artichoke was not a whit less anxious to hear and know every thing than her friend Mrs Curmuddie, yet it unluckily happened, from her abode being situated in rather an out-of-the-way place, that she was not so frequently in the way of catching intelligence as her more fortunate companion; but when a lucky opportunity of securing anything fresh did arise, it was seldom allowed to slip through her fingers. As both were thorough clashing wives, and neither was ashamed of being such, it was not to be wondered that they generally had about the first news of whatever took place.

On the present occasion of their meeting, Kirsty's face bore signs of her having something to communicate rather more extraordinary than usual; and the solemn way she shook her head back and forward, and from side to side, as she, to the hurried inquiries of Mrs Artichoke, only ejaculated, "O wae's me!" "O losh preserve us!" tended to increase the mystery of her errand. The curiosity of Mrs Artichoke had from the first begun to be evinced, but she now showed herself to be very

deeply interested and considerably excited. Mrs Curmuddie also got a little agitated herself, and paraded up and down the house, nodding, shaking her head, and "*wa'e's me-ing*" at a great rate.

"Preserve us a'! what's vrang, Mrs Curmuddie?" said Mrs Artichoke, in perfect astonishment. "Losh keep me! sit down, woman. A' the news ever ye brocht me ne'er pat you in a sic a pickle; but ye look fortiget like, sae I daresay I'll bring a wee hair o' speerits tae pit ye a' richt, an' then ye'll surely let me hear what's the matter."

So saying, Mrs Artichoke departed to procure the "hair" she had alluded to; and Mrs Curmuddie, still shaking her head, seated herself with a heavy sigh, to await the return of her amiable companion.

As Mrs Artichoke had only to run round to her hiding-place about the garden or stable, it was not long till she re-appeared, and produced from under her apron a small bottle, which she placed on the table. She then washed out a tea-cup, which stood as it had been used at breakfast, and giving it a hasty dry with her apron, she filled it nearly full of the material from the bottle, and held it out to Mrs Curmuddie.

"Say awa yersel' first, my woman," said Mrs Curmuddie, drawing back with pretty evident reluctance the hand she had mechanically extended to take the cup.

"Nae havers nae," said Mrs Artichoke, shoving the cup nearer to Mrs Curmuddie; "say awa nae! say awa!"

"Oy ay, ye're aye sic a kind body, that I fancy I maun jist tak it," rejoined Mrs Curmuddie, timidly taking the cup from Mrs Artichoke, and raising it halfway to her lips, when she checked its farther ascent; and eyeing its contents with a solemn stare, she said, in her most melancholy tone, "O dear me! but *that's* been an awfu' job, Mrs Archychok!"

"*What's* been an awfu' job?" earnestly inquired Mrs Artichoke, setting the bottle on the table, and looking

imploringly in her neighbour's face. "This is dreadful thegither, woman; lordsake, tell me!"

"That's a pickle prime speerits, Mrs Archychok," replied Mrs Curmuddie, who, having tasted while her friend was addressing her, was now smacking her lips, and putting on the usual sour look which expresses so well the strength of the liquor, or affords such ample proof of the partaker's temperate habits, by showing how unaccustomed he or she has been to the practice of whisky-drinking. Having got her grimaces all gone through, Mrs Curmuddie handed the cup towards Mrs Artichoke, with an affected shudder.

"Hoot-toot-oot!" returned Mrs Artichoke, holding up both hands, "tak it up, woman; losh me, tak it up! A' that's in't ill ne'er ring yer mill; and what's the use o' makin' twa bites o' a cherry wi' a wee pourin' like that?—for there's plenty here for me," she continued, lifting the bottle, and looking through it, "sae tak oot yer mouthfu' there, an' nae havers."

Mrs Artichoke's anxiety to know the "awfu' job" was nothing in the least reduced while the conversation and this other small matter were going on; but she knew well, from past experience, that unless Mrs Curmuddie told her story in her own way and at her own time, there would be no possibility of "speerin' it oot," especially as she saw Mrs Artichoke was in total ignorance; for, as Mrs Artichoke had frequently remarked, "unless it cam entirely aff Kirsty's ain side o' the house, it was ten tae ane if ony thing was got oot o' her at a', when a' the thing lay wi' hersel'."

Mrs Curmuddie, after being encouraged, tasted again; but said, as she did so, "I'm fear'd tae tak it oot, in case it should tak my scaup, as a wee drap's almost sure tae hurt me: but," she continued, raising her voice, "it's no every day you an' me has a bit mouthfu' thegither, Mrs Archychok; and tho' I dinna exackly like it, it's my duty tae tak it; sae here's tae ye again, a' sorts o't. But, dear me, that wae some job! and tho'

we baith ken murnin' 'ill dae nae guid noo, Mrs Archy-chok, folk canna help bein' wae." Considering this satisfactory in every respect, she raised the cup to her head, and at one draught sent the whole remaining contents down her throat, and returned it empty to her friend, who was still standing with her face projecting forward, all in eagerness to hear what this often-alluded-to "job" would really turn out to be. Mrs Artichoke had ejaculated "O preserve us!" but the return of the cup so far recalled her thoughts, that she helped herself to a similar allowance, and drunk to Mrs Curmuddie's "healthsome prosperity;" after which, she put away the bottle with its now scanty supply into a snug corner.

"Noo nae," said Mrs Artichoke, seating herself beside her friend, "sin' we've made oursel's comfortable, I'll jist sit down, and ye'll tell me a' what's the matter; for it's surely something partickler exterornar that *you're* sae pat about wi' it."

"O woman, my heart's wae tae think about it," said Mrs Curmuddie, sighing. "I've jist been down the toun, tae see Mrs Mushroom's twa weans that's no weel wi' the fiver; and as I was"——

"Losh pity me, woman! an' are the twa lambs nae better yet?" inquired Mrs Artichoke, interrupting her.

"Guid forgie me!" returned Mrs Curmuddie; "it's no them. But, mercy on us! wha's this comin'?" she continued, stretching her neck, and looking out at the window. "Charlie Spades nae less, an' on a pownie tae! My certie! thae vulturs sune smell a job;" and rising, she ran to the door, to have a better view of the person she spoke of as he went past the house.

"So you're up an' at it the day, lad," she exclaimed, as Charlie Spades, the parish grave-digger, came trotting to the door on a pony he had been favoured with a loan of by the landlord of the "Cheerie Farmers," as the village Inn was called. "I fancy I needna ask what's

takin' ye awa in sic haste? onybody 'ill guess that, that sees you the day, an' kens wha ye are."

Charlie was one of those who give themselves very little concern about either one thing or another; and unless it was relating to something connected with his calling, no person ever knew him put himself to any trouble whatever. He was a quiet, inoffensive man; but so enthusiastic and methodical in his profession, that for the sake of officiating, he, independent of his fee, would have buried father or mother, or any one, without the least scruple. His chief peculiarity was a singular custom of keeping his head almost incessantly on the move, and looking from side to side with an anxious eye. He had once, in the course of his subterranean excavations, made rather a lucky escape from being buried alive under a mass of earth which came down upon him, as he was giving the finishing touches to the bottom of a grave; and he had been so terrified on that occasion, that for long after he kept such a strict look-out on both sides of him when so engaged, for fear of a recurrence of the catastrophe, that his head had got fairly into the habit of turning of its own accord, like the heads of the Chinese figures in shop windows.

There was something rather appalling in his hollow, under-ground, grave-like voice, as he slowly and with marked emphasis drawled out to Mrs Curmuddie, in answer to her salute—"Maybe! maybe they wull; but I daresay everybody winna guess what *you're* daein' here, *when ye've sae muckle need tae be at hame*; an' tho' a' body should ken what's takin' me awa, what's aboot it? I wad like tae ken wha has mair richt tae mak inquiries about the like o' that than I hae? tho' I hinna said ye're richt aither. But *if every ane mindit their ain business as weel's I dae mine*, it micht no be *sae ill wi' them* the day as it is."

"What in the world's vrang?" chimed in Mrs Arti-choke. "Lucky here began tae tell me aboot the twa

lambs, but she stopped in the middle. Puir bddy, Mrs Mushroom! if the twa puir weans be ta'en awa, what's tae come owre her?"

"Bless us a'!" said Charlie, "the hale parish is surely upside down! what's wrang wi' Mrs Mushroom? Is the bairns dead?"

"There's naething mair than ordinar' wrang wi' them," said Mrs Curmuddie, striking in. "I only said tae Mrs Archychok, that I ca'd there as I cam by, tae see hoo they were."

"It wad maybe been better for ye, *the day at ony rate*, if ye had stayed at hame and mindit *yer ain* weans, instead o' gaun awa gapin' through the country this way," retorted Charlie.

"What dae ye mean, man?" said Mrs Curmuddie, anxiously pausing for a reply.

"Is the awfu' business no aboot the bairns that hae haen the tyfes fiver?" inquired Mrs Artichoke, looking first at Mrs Curmuddie and then at Charlie, apparently at a great loss to guess their meaning, or connect what she had heard.

"Hiv they seen onything o' the villain yet that ye hear o', Charlie?" asked Mrs Curmuddie, seemingly unmindful of Charlie's solemn tones, as her own anxiety for news increased at hearing Mrs Artichoke's question.

"Ou ay; if it's tae satisfy ye onything," returned Charlie, "I may tell ye he's a' safe, an' aff wi' Watty Baton, the policeman, an hour sin'. But I didna think you was sae dull i' the uptak, that after a' what I've said aboot *yer ain*, ye wad be keener tae hear aboot ither ffolk than o' them; but onything that disna or sudna concern ye, is the thing for you; tho' I excuse ye aboot this, for maybe it may gie ye mair concern than tho' a' yer ain were"——

"Gracious me, Charlie!" hastily interposed Mrs Curmuddie, changing colour a little, and looking somewhat perplexed, "*ye dinna mean* that there's onything

vrang wi' ony o' mine, dae ye? for ye're aye sae sair on me, that I hardly ken whan ye're in yirnest."

"Guidness gracious me!" cried Mrs Artichoke, almost at the same time, "what in a' the yirth is't that's been dune? wha's hurt? or wha's awa wi' Watty Baton?"

"If ye dinna ken 'whan I'm in yirnest,'" said Charlie, collecting his ideas, and addressing Mrs Curmuddie, "I canna help it; but I think I've tauld ye gie an' plain, that ye wad hae been better employed at hame mindin' yer ain matters. It wad maybe no hae been sae ill for ye had ye been there, and at ony rate ye wadna likely ta'en't sae ill if ye had been at hand when it happened, turn oot hoo it may."

"Gracious guidness! tell me what ye mean, man," cried Mrs Curmuddie, in alarm; "dinna gang sae far round about the bus wi't."

"Losh, man! dinna keep the puir woman in suspension if onything's vrang," said Mrs Artichoke; "that canna dae ye ony guid."

"I've nae mind tae dae that at a'," said Charlie, quietly. "The lang and the short o't is jist this, that as I cam along, yer youngest laddie was stickin' wi' his head dounmost in the water-barrel at the end o' yer house, an' his feet up in the air, an' we trail'd him oot; but"——

"Mercy on us a'!" cried both listeners, "was he clean dead?"

"He was mair dead than leevin', at ony rate," replied Charlie, his head swinging impatiently; "but I left them doukin' him in a tub o' het water, an' giein' him a guid creeshin' wi' a stick, tae gaur his bluid wurble, an' he may come round for ocht I ken. But I maun be gaun noo, for I didna ettle tae pit aff sae lang wi' ye when ye stoppit me."

"So maun I," cried Mrs Curmuddie, bursting into tears. "Me stannin' claverin' here, and my puir bairn *maybe at its last gasp, or dead a'thegither!*" So saying, *she started off at a rapid pace.*

"I'll be up aboot the gloamin', tae see hoo he is, if I can mak it," cried Mrs Artichoke, shouting after Mrs Curmuddie as she hurried along; while Charlie added, before there was time to interrogate him further,

"I'll bid ye guid-day, for it's time I was there, and I've a guid dunt tae gae owre forby;" and having said this, he went off at a canter, and left Mrs Artichoke to meditate on what she had heard, and put what construction she pleased on the broken-off story of her friend, which the arrival of the grave-digger had prevented her hearing to the issue, as there is every probability would have been the result, but for the consternation caused by his startling communication.

CHAPTER II.

While we sit bousing at the nappy,
And gettin' fou and unco happy,
We think na on the land Scotch miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Where sits our sulky sullen dame,
Tam o' Shanter.

Mrs ARTICHOKE, left to herself, began to turn over in her mind what she had heard from her friend Mrs Curmuddie, and to speculate and wonder a great deal what it really could mean. It was true, that at times before the present occasion, when her friend had excited her hopes that she had something wonderful in store to communicate, it not unfrequently turned out, even after time had been allowed Mrs Curmuddie to finish the story in her own way, to be of no very great moment, and barely sufficient to furnish matter for their commenting upon to such extent as they generally wished. Mrs Curmuddie, however, had appeared to Mrs Artichoke in this instance, from her extra agitation, to be in possession of something really extraordinary, or at least of more importance than her stories usually were. As Charlie Spades also had seemed to know something of it, and appeared to be a little anxious to get more particulars, as shown by his having taken the trouble to procure the horse to facilitate his transit to some place or other, apparently in connection with the mystery, she felt there was some reason, even after making allowance for Mrs Curmuddie's partiality for magnifying every trifle that came under her notice, to *believe that the occurrence, or whatever it might be,*

was something that did not often take place, and in her mind made it certain to herself that, be what it liked, it was neither marriage nor birth, but that with the death of some one it must surely have to do, from Charlie's taking such an uncommon interest in seeing after it. "But wha could it be?" she asked herself. "It was not Mrs Mushroom's weans she meant, though they were mix'd up wi' the story, and had been unweel. But it's true that some o' the auld bodies hae been compleening, wha by the course o' natur are no expecket to get better, though the like o' them slippin' awa is an every-day occurrence, and no at a' likely tae pit Mrs Curmuddie aff her balance, or cause her muckle uneasiness."

"Tuts! what about it?" she at length said to herself; "what needs I bather guess, guessin' at what I hae little notion whether I'm near the richt thing or no? I'll hear't some time, if there's onything in't; though, after a', it may turn oot, like ithers o' Kirsty's havers, to be little better than naething. But I'll get it frae Benjie when he comes hame frae the market; for if it's o' ony consequence, he'll ken a' about it. Maybe she'll be back again, though, afore he's hame; but if she sudna and he disna ken, she'll likely tell me a' about it when I gae up to see how her bairn thrives, if I dinna hear onything o't otherways afore then."

Having thus resolved to content herself in the meantime, and ordered her little girl, who had been superintending the cradle, the occupier of which had just awoke, and was beginning to be a little noisy, to "tak the sprechin crater oot o' her gaet, and gie't a walk," she commenced to put her house in order for the day.

The "Benjie" to whom Mrs Artichoke had referred as being likely to set her conjectures at rest on this, to her, perplexing subject, was her husband, Benjamin Artichoke. He had left early in the morning, as was his custom on certain days, with a cart-load of vegetables and other produce of his garden, for the purpose of

disposing of them at a market in a neighbouring town, or at any of the villages through which he might pass on the way. As he had occasion to stop frequently by the road while thus engaged, it was but reasonable for Mrs Artichoke to suppose that he would be able to inform her if anything wonderful had happened in the places through which he had passed. Benjie, independent of his having a pretty strong liking himself for hearing all that was occurring wherever he went, was, by his calling of travelling gardener, rather encouraged in this inclination, from opportunities afforded for indulging it, as he was always expected by his customers both to bring and take whatever news or messages they might either have an interest in hearing or wish to get conveyed. He was quite the man to accommodate them, either in this or any other way in his power; always ready to give his customers a share of his gill, take a share of theirs if proffered, or demand it when he considered it his due. Every one was happy to take a glass in his company, whether they had to pay for it or not. He sang so well and so willingly, and did everything to amuse and please with such good grace, that all who had the honour of his friendship, and privilege of enjoying these liberties with him, considered themselves highly favoured indeed.

The day advanced; and as the time at which he generally reached home drew near, Mrs Artichoke began to feel the hours very tedious, and to suppose her clock handles were taking unusually long to make their circuit; and when they eventually found their way past the usual hour of his return, she *did* begin to weary very much for his arrival, and made many an anxious errand to the door to look for him. She strained and rubbed her eyes, and looked down the road often and eagerly; but there was no appearance of the cart. "What could be keeping him *that* night?" she began to ask herself. Again she looked, but *disappointment still kept its ground*, and the departing day

gradually lessened the distance of her view, till darkness obstructed it altogether. As the night continued to fly, her anxiety increased more and more; and the thoughts of what had passed between her and Mrs Curmuddie commenced to assume a new footing, and to call up others that had never occurred to her during the day.

"Dear keep us a'!" she said to her little girl, "what can be keepin' yer faither? I'm turnin' frichtet that something's come owre him."

"Has he no been often later than this afore, mother?" inquired the little girl, looking pitifully in her mother's face. "Dinna] be vex: ye ken he has Willie wi' him, and he'll tak care o' him."

"O I daresay he's been owre often later than this, my bonny wee woman," replied her mother. "But, dear me! what was I thinking on when Mrs Curmuddie was speaking to me? I see't a' noo! That's the way she was sae sweer'd tae let me win at the bottom o' the thing. It's yer puir faither, my lamb, that there's something happen'd tae. That's what she wad be meanin' a' the time, an' no like to tell me!"

"What is't, mother?" said the little girl, beginning to cry. "What's vrang wi' my puir faither? has ony body meddled wi' him? Willie surely wadna let them."

"Wheesht! wheesht! what's that?" said the mother, listening intently. "There's the sound o' the beast's feet!" and she started up, and ran to the door, in eagerness to see that all was well. She looked out, and the sound was very near at hand, and came nearer—nearer; but those she expected were not there, and she barely recognised, in the indifferent light, a figure on horseback ride rapidly past. This was Charlie Spades returning home.

"Dear me!" said Mrs Artichoke, recollecting who the rider was after he had passed, "I wish I had been sooner, an' stoppit him. But gae wa' in, like a woman,

an' sit down an' watch the bairn; tho' it's late, I'll rin up to Mrs Curmuddie, as I promised, an' get her to tell me what's the matter, an' if there's onything wrang wi' yer puir faither. If ye lock the door, ye'll no be frichtet; an' I'll be back in a wee gliff."

"No, no, mother," said the child; "I'll no be fear'd to bide, if ye lowse Robbie, an' let him in to stop beside me. He'll bite ony body that wad come to meddle me. I'll no be fear'd if he's in."

"Very weel, I'll dae that," said Mrs Artichoke, letting loose the dog, an ill-favoured, savage-looking animal that was chained at the door. "There, Robbie," she said, "ye're a guid beast; ye'll nolet ony body fash wi' Maggie. Gang in, an' lie down beside her, like a guid dog."

Robbie rushed into the house, and back to the door again two or three times, and leaped on Mrs Artichoke and on Maggie, notwithstanding their repeated commands to lie down; but by the time Mrs Artichoke got a plaid wrapped round her head, he had exhausted his show of pleasure, and quietly taken up his quarters on the hearth-stone.

As the distance between Mrs Artichoke's house and that of her friend was little more than half a mile, it was not many minutes till the twinkle of a light at the window showed that Mrs Curmuddie had not retired for the night.

Mrs Artichoke lifted the latch without taking the trouble to knock, but the door was fastened inside. But the sound had been heard; for the voice of Mrs Curmuddie was distinctly recognised saying to herself, "Wha in the world's this comin' tae disturb folk at this time o' nicht?" as she approached the door with a candle in her hand; while Mrs Artichoke trembled at the thought of the answers she expected to receive to the questions she was about to put.

"Is there ony body there?" cried Mrs Curmuddie through the keyhole.

"*Open the door, for guidsic!*" cried Mrs Artichoke,

considerably agitated; "it's me. D'ye ken onything o' my man?"

"My faith, ye're no slack wi' yer questions naither—to think that I should hae men i' my house at this untimeous hour!" cried Mrs Curmuddie, very fiercely. "I think I should ken yer tongue, though," she continued a shade softer; "but I wad like as weel if ye wad say whae ye are first, afore I open the door, if ye want me to do't; or if no, and ye dinna want to say, ye can bide yer wa's there, wi' yer impidence."

"Ye're turned most awfu' sicker, surely," replied Mrs Artichoke; "but it's me—it's me; it's Mysie Archychok, come up as"——

"Preserve me!" cried Mrs Curmuddie, opening the door before Mrs Artichoke had time to finish her sentence, "an' I'm stannin' keepin' *you* ahint my door, Mrs Archychok? I didna ken it was you, or I wad open'd the door at the first. I didna use to be owre ready lockin' up aither, but folk's no sure aboot leaving their doors agee noo after what's ta'en place. But, dear me, how white ye're lookin'! I houp there's naething else vrang, or that ye've seen naething uncanny by the road?"

"I'm glad to hear ye ask the question, Mrs Curmuddie," replied Mrs Artichoke, somewhat relieved; "for I dinna think but ye wad hae tell'd me if ony thing had happen'd my guidman, if ye had meant ony thing aboot him frae what ye said i' the mornin'."

"Preserve us a'! Mrs Archychok, has ony thing happen'd to him tae?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie; "for he's weel and hale, sae far as I ken an' houp."

"Weel, woman," said Mrs Artichoke, "ye've relieved my mind; for as he's no hame frae the market yet, I hiv haen sair misgivin's, and hae been thinkin' ever sin' it gaed by his time, that it had been aboot him ye were alludin' when ye were down i' the forenoon."

"Folks ain't aye upmost, Mrs Archychok," said Mrs Curmuddie; "but I dinna think nae, atween you and

me, that ye need hae pat yersel' aboot because the guidman's a wee bit past the time that he's *whyles* hame at, when ye ken he's far oftener the ither way. Bless me! folk canna aye get awa at the moment they wad like, Mrs Archychok," she continued, smiling; "an' it's no every day yer guidman may meet wi' the freends he may hae seen the day; an' if he's bidden a wee langer than he should maybe dune, ye maun look owre't, as ye've often dune afore; for there's nae help for the like o' thae things, whan folk's oot an' exposed."

"Ye're speakin' guid sense, Mrs Curmuddie—guid sense truly," returned Mrs Artichoke; "but it was yer ain words that frichten'd me, tho' ye didna mean't, I daresay. But I've forgot to ask ye for your wee bit mannie—how is he? I houp he's no nane the waur o' his doukie?"

"I dinna ken that he's ony muckle the better o't aither," replied Mrs Curmuddie, "excep it 'ill maybe keep him on his feet, an' learn him no tae clim' an' crawl places whaur he's nae business; but tae tell the truth, the crater's been gie weel soused, an' he's far frae bein' a'thegither richt."

"Ou, but if ye gie him a' wee pourin' o' sinney-tea, an' a bit skeegin' o' salts in't, he'll be a' better if he had a bit sleep after't," said Mrs Artichoke. "But, dear me! I wad hardly hae thocht a wee vratch like that could speel'd up tae the barrel; but it's a mercy he was got oot wi' life in his body."

"Naither he did, woman, naither he did," returned Mrs Curmuddie; "but he was flung in, an' that's jist as bad."

"Lord bless me!" ejaculated Mrs Artichoke, "whatna monster could find in his heart to throw onybody's bairn into a place like the barrel? Ye should really tell the policeman to gie them a fleg for't."

"Watty Baton has plenty on his hands the noo, without batherin' wi' ony sic a cuddy," returned Mrs Curmuddie, "tak ye my word for that."

"If that's a' yer gaun tae say for folk ill-using yer puir wean," said Mrs Artichoke, something displeased at the apparent want of affection on the part of Mrs Curmuddie; "I can tell ye naebody wad abuse a bairn o' mine that way, and get aff wi' baith ease an' honour."

"Naebody wad use mine that way aither, Mrs Archychock, and get aff sae simply as ye think," returned Mrs Curmuddie; "but a body canna seek tae mak muckle o' a puir hermless dumb crater, whan it's been a' the bairn's wyte."

"Bless me!" said Mrs Artichoke, with considerable alarm in her countenance, "an' did Dumb Jamie really dae that? and is that a' ye'll say against him for't? Losh, woman! I aye like't the puir crater, an' was sae kind tae him, an' ye was a guid freend till him yersel' tae, if I'm no mista'en; but if he's got naething better tae dae than throwin' folk's weans into water-buckets, an' half-drounin' them, it's time anither tow was thrawn i' his rock. My certie! I was aye tauld thae dummies wasna owre muckle tae luppin tae, an' this looks awfu' like's it was owre true."

"My woman, if that's a' ye ken, let me tell ye, it wad be the last o' puir Dumb Jamie's daein's tae herm aither me or mine," said Mrs Curmuddie, smiling. "But you're no takin' me up richt; for the dumb animal I mean is naither mair nor less than Saut Meg's cuddy-ass."

"Guid keep me!" said Mrs Artichoke, also smiling at the mistake; "but what was a wee crater like that daein' wi' Saut Meg's cuddy?"

"Ay, what indeed? that's the bit. Ye may weel ask that," returned Mrs Curmuddie; "for I was bonny angry mysel' when I thocht somebody had pat him up on its back."

"I'm gie sure he ne'er gaed on himsel' aither," said Mrs Artichoke; "at least he's no like it."

"But I can jist tell ye ye're sure o' naething o' the

kind, tho'," said Mrs Curmuddie. "I thocht I was sure o' that mysel' till I heard the richt set o't."

"Hoo did he dae't, then?" inquired Mrs Artichoke. "I wad never ance wonder at him bein' flung aff, if I was ance sure he was on; but I ken it's no the beast tae stand an' let aither him or ony ither body on't without a bonny bather, or else it's chang'd unco sin' I kenn'd it. I've seen baith auld an' young tryin' tae get up on't, wi' chairs an' every way ye could think o', but it was a sair job, and they were aye maistly ahint the bed wi't; for if they did get on, they were aff again wi' a clash jist aboot as sune. But I dinna see hoo your bit laddie could manage't at a'."

"Ye're quite richt there, Mrs Archychok," said Mrs Curmuddie. "He didna get up aither that way or ony way you or me wad thocht o'. The beast was gaun eatin' at the roadside, an' the little scraper there (little hauds me frae gien him something for his pains yet), thinkin' the chance guid for tae get a ride, had tried tae pu' his sel' up by its mane, an' made twa-three gie narrow escapes o' gettin' his brains clash'd oot, like what happen'd this mornin'; but findin' he could mak naething o't that way, he brocht oot a pail o' taties that he could hardly wauchle wi', an' set them down afore the cuddie. While it was eatin' them, ye see, the young sautan crawl'd up owre its lugs on tae its back, for the cuddie stood quiet till he finish'd his wamefu'; then wi' a loud nicher he gied his feet a great kick oot, an' his back a kietch up, an' sent the wean into the barrel; an' I think the fleg he's got 'ill gaur him be contented wi' gaun on his legs like ither folk, an' keep him frae tryin' thae cantrips again."

"Deed I think it should," said Mrs Artichoke; "but what did ye mean by sayin' that Watty Baton had his hands fou, an' somebody's brains, this mornin'? Your words *will* surely hae *some* meanin', Mrs Curmuddie."

"Dear bless me! hae ye no heard o' the bluidy affair *yet, woman?*" said Mrs Curmuddie, somewhat amazed.

"Ye surely never hear naething unless I tell ye. It's our puir doctor was kill'd this mornin'—murder'd in cauld bluid, Mrs Archychok! murder'd in cauld bluid!"

"Our puir doctor kill'd an' murder'd!" cried Mrs Artichoke, holding up both her hands. "That's the meanin' o' what my wee laddie Jamie saw on the floor this mornin' whan he was lookin' oot o' his bed; but wha in a' the world was't that did it?"

"What did your wee Jamie see this mornin'?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie, speaking in a very low tone, and opening her eyes very wide. "Did he see the doctor's bluidy wraith, or hear a dead rap? There was a dead spale at my can'le last nicht, noo whan I mind, an' the whistle-whaups and peaseweeps owre in the Faugh Park were screamin' at an unco rate."

"O yes, they're terrible things thae eerie sounds and sights; an' tho' the folk are makin' licht o' the bell that rang at the bed-head o' Tamy Napper, the road-scraper, afore he slippit awa, an' sayin' it was made by a ratton that had been let awa wi' a wee bell round its neck tae frichten its neebors, they'll ne'er gaur me misbelieve my ain bairn," said Mrs Artichoke, speaking as if she had made up her mind to treat with the utmost contempt any questioning of her authority and knowledge on these points.

"I wonder wha wad hae the impidence tae doot what yer bairn saw?" said Mrs Curmuddie; "but they're fit enough for ony thing, whan they wad mak sic a mockery o' the warnin'-bell at auld Tamy Napper's. But the puir silly craters o' folk noo-a-days are train'd tae trait the beliefs o' their forefaithers wi' great disrespeck, tho' there's nane o' mine 'ill ever need tae begin that way. But what did ye say that yer wee mannie did see then, Mrs Archychok?"

"My laddie," said Mrs Artichoke, "cried tae me this mornin', afore I was oot o' my bed, that there was a *great big bluidy head* lyin' at the front o' the dresser

CHAPTER III.

Now wad ye profit by my plight?
Then tak advice frae me, man,
And ne'er let common sense tak flight,
On fumes o' barleybree, man.
Old Song.

MRS ARTICHOKE, though greatly relieved of all apprehensions for her husband's safety, so far as its being coupled with the conversation of Mrs Curmuddie, in the early part of the day, had anything to do, still felt a little uneasy about him; but she consoled herself with the expectation that she would find him all right at home on her return. Being one of that kind of people who are superstitious to a certain degree, though not troubled with a slavish terror when walking in the dark, she felt that there might be something or other to be frightened for, and which might frighten her for all she knew, so she kept herself prepared, and her courage at its highest, in case it might be she should see or hear anything to call it to the test.

Excepting the usual bushes, gateposts, and the like, which the imagination is always ready to transform into walking figures and objects crouching and skulking with some evil intent, Mrs Artichoke was favoured with a sight of nothing very remarkable; and any little starts that she did get, did not come to such an extent as to cause actual fright, for most, or indeed all, of the waving branches and things she happened to see, lay in the road before her, over which she had to pass, and the

nearer approach always made the real state of matters apparent, and divested the sights of all horror.

Though frightened people generally dread most danger from behind, yet, for all that, it is but seldom they ever venture on

“Glowrin’ round wi’ prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch them unawares;”

but keep a good look-out in front, to make sure of what they really have to face; and should they find the road clear, and nothing to cause them much alarm, they go over it pretty quickly, but all the while in secret dread of—they don’t know what. But they are generally ready on the alert, in case of being clutched from behind by some supernatural wanderer, or some other equally dreadful thing happening. Perhaps the most wonderful thing connected with this stupid fear is, the facility with which the dreaded direction can be changed to suit the fancy of the walker. If he were to turn and retrace his steps, there would immediately be as great reluctance in looking over the shoulder in the direction that was considered all clear, when the face was turned towards it, as there was in casting a backward glance, before turning round and proceeding in the direction then dreaded, and which now has all its former terrors carried to the rear again by the imagination.

Mrs Artichoke, though she felt a little eerie, got home without anything disturbing her very much, except the crying of an owl, though fortunately she did not consider this a very bad thing for her or hers, as the cry went *away from her*; but she set down the unhallowed sound, as she termed it, to be some dire foreboding of evil of some kind or other to some person or persons then unknown, but which would be certain to happen, and which she would be equally sure to hear about when it did take place, as she had heard the foreboding cry. Had it happened differently, or if some other person

had started the owl from its perch, and it had flown *towards* her, and cried, what a different and more direful construction would have been put upon it by poor Mrs Artichoke! She found her way home all safe and sound, notwithstanding the cry of the ill-omened bird; but great was her distress on reaching there to find that her husband had not returned. He *had* been later before, it was true; but that was no consolation, after disagreeable presentiments, picturing disasters of every possible kind, began to take possession of her mind, and forced her to the belief that something *really must* have happened to him.

The little girl had been almost asleep by the time of her mother's return; and not being able to sit up longer, Mrs Artichoke put her to bed, and sat down by the fire in company with Robbie, to await her husband's return. She listened in silence, and often fancied she heard the sound of the cart at the door; but it was long in coming, and the sounds died away with the wind that howled down the chimney. While she thus sat pondering on what the cry of the owl could mean, she was suddenly started from her reverie by Robbie giving two or three harsh *bowhs*, and raising his head as if listening to something that had disturbed his repose.

"What is't, Robbie, my man?" said Mrs Artichoke, patting his head. "Are ye beginnin' tae be sensible tae that a's no a'thegither richt? Ye're a wise beast; but I dinna like thae boss barks o' yours at this time o' nicht, that's the truth."

She stopped and listened again, while Robbie gave another growl. She thought she heard the sound of the jolt of a cart,—again—again. She was now sure there was a cart coming, and Robbie ran and snuffed at the bottom of the door.

The sound drew nearer, and became so distinctly audible as to leave no doubt of its being the noise of *a cart*. She could not be sensible, however, which

direction it was coming; and she thought alternately, as the sound seemed to vary, that it was their cart, and that it was not; while she busied herself breaking up the fire and getting a candle lighted, to be prepared, at any rate, if it should be her husband.

She opened the door, as the cart seemed, from the noise, to be close at hand, and looked along the road both ways, but could not see a cart in either direction, as it was pretty dark. But the sound did come from the right quarter, and Robbie ran off wagging his tail, and returned immediately running round the cart, and leaping with joy.

"Preserve us a! what way are ye sae late the nicht?" cried Mrs Artichoke, as the cart came up to the door. "What in a' the yirth's keepit ye, Benjie?"

"Ay, ye may weel ask what's keepit us?" returned her son, who was leading the horse; "but ye needna trouble yersel' speerin' at my faither, for it will be a gie while or he can answer ye."

"Preserve me! Willie, whaur is yer faither, an' what's come owre him?" cried Mrs Artichoke. "What way did ye no come hame an' tell me?"

"I cam hame as quick as I could," returned Willie; "but I hardly expeckit to get hame the nicht."

"Whaur the yirth is he then, an' what is he aboot?" said Mrs Artichoke, a little displeased that she had been giving herself so much concern, for she guessed by Willie's answer that Benjie had fallen in by the road with some of his drinking friends, as he frequently had the misfortune to do.

"He's in the bottom o' the cart there, happit owre wi' basses an' pocks," said Willie; "an' I fancy he'll be sleepin', so it will be a bonny fecht to get him oot; for it took baith Auld Studdie an' Bow'd Jock to lift him in; but to be sure they were gie weel sair'd tae, tho' no jist sae clean by wi't as my faither."

"If I had haen a string at yer lug," said Mrs Artichoke,

choke, turning off the coverings with which her husband was enveloped, and shaking him by the arm, "I wad gaur'd ye come a wee quicker oot the gaet; get up wi' ye, an' no lie snortin' there."

"'Scots—wha—hae—wi'—Wallace—bled,'"

drawled or rather gasped the sleeper, as he turned half over and fell a snoring again.

"Come, get up! stand up," said Mrs Artichoke, again shaking him pretty roughly. "Stand up, man!"

"Ay—ay," said he suddenly, and as if consciousness had been restored to him. "I'll stand—yes—yes, I'll stand a mutchkin—come, landlord—fill the"—but he immediately began snoring and groaning more fearfully than ever.

"I see there's nae use tryin' to get him oot this way, Willie, my man," said Mrs Artichoke; "we'll jist hae tae tak him the auld way. Lowse the beast oot o' the cart, an' I'll tak the back boord aff, an' we'll tumble't up a wee bit till his feet slides oot on the grund."

As thus directed, Willie took the pony out of the cart, and he and his mother doing as she had suggested, they got the almost lifeless occupant, and the other contents of the cart, deposited on the ground without much trouble.

"I'll can manage ye noo," said Mrs Artichoke, putting her arms under his from behind, and dragging him in at the door, when with some difficulty she succeeded in placing him in the armed chair.

He was no sooner in this position than he commenced to retch violently; and drooping his head, began to vomit and groan louder than he had been doing.

Mrs Artichoke ran and filled a bowl with water, and proceeded to hold up his head for the purpose of giving him a drink, or rather of pouring some of it over his *throat; but her efforts in this direction were unsucces-*

ful. "Mercy me!" she exclaimed, on beholding his face, "the man's choking; his een's stilled in his head, and his face is a' black an' blue. Guid guide us! what's to be dune?" So saying, and setting down the water, she hurried out to the stable, where her son was putting up the pony, exclaiming, "Willie! Willie! my man, ye'll hae to rin for the doctor to yer puir faither. He's turn'd most awfu' ill wi' cholera, or some ither fearfu' thing, an' he's bockin' an' spewin' like to set up gut an' ga'."

"Maybe he'll be better if his stamack was toomed," returned Willie, "for there's a pour o' ae thing an' anither in't; and I think that's the first thing to dae him guid."

"Ay, if it was only that, I wadna mind," returned Mrs Artichoke; "but his een's startit in his head like to loup oot o' their sockets, an' his face is gettin' a' blue an' discoloured. See what a job it'll be if ony thing ails yer faither! What wad come owre us a'? Gae wa' for the doctor, like a guid laddie, an' dae what I bid ye."

"Ye ken ou canna get *the* doctor noo, mother," returned Willie; "for he'll ne'er come here again."

"I ken that, my man," returned his mother; "but try Dr Plyphleme. He's better than naebody, and it'll save reflections."

"If ye want him, I maun gang then," said Willie, putting the bridle on the reluctant pony, and leading him from the stable. "What will I say to the doctor about my faither?" he continued as he mounted.

"Jist—that—he's turned unco unweel," said Mrs Artichoke, after a moment's consideration; "an' tell him to come as sune as he can, an' be as quick's ye can yersel' gaun doun."

"I'll no pit aff muckle time," returned Willie, going off as fast as the tired pony could run.

Benjie was just in the same position when his wife returned as when she left him; so she proceeded at

once to get him undressed, at which she was pretty expert, from frequently requiring to practise it, when he was not in his worst cases, and it was not long till she had him lifted into bed, where he lay groaning and snoring, and muttering a great deal about gills and toasts.

"Dear bless me! I wonder what the doctor will think?" she said to herself, taking the candle and going to the bedside; "but his groanin' has a most alarmin' ill sound, and I dinna like his chang'd look. Losh keep me! it's an awfu' thing that a man that gangs awa' wi' his senses, canna come hame as he gangs. I wouldna mind a man takin' a mouthfu', as lang's he can stand steive in his shoon; but I wad rather see a' the barrels in the land staved, an' run down Clyde, than hae mony mair jobs like this an' what I've haen this while back. But after a'," she continued, after having looked at him again, "he's maybe no sae bad's he looks like; but I canna help being frichtet, after what I've heard tell o' this dreadfu' day, forby hearin' that nasty roarin' brute as I cam down frae Mrs Curmuddie's.

"Preserve me!" she exclaimed, starting as a horse trotted heavily up to the door, "can that be the doctor already? My certie, he's no been lang!"

It was indeed Dr Plyphleme, accompanied by her son, who had met him by the way. He alighted, and giving his horse to Willie to hold, came into the house with great professional importance. Divesting himself of his hat, gloves, and whip, he coughed loudly three or four times, wiped his forehead with great care, and then inquired, in a consequential tone, "Well, my good lady, what's the matter with your husband, ma'am?"

"I dinna exackly ken, sir," said Mrs Artichoke, looking a little confused; "but I'm awfu' feared case it's the cholera or some o' thae things, for I've seldom
seen"

"Where is he, my good lady?" inquired the doctor stopping her. "I'll see what's wrong myself, ma'am."

"He's here, sir," said Mrs Artichoke, drawing aside the bed curtains. "Rise up, Benjamin," she continued, taking him by the shoulders; "here's the doctor come to see ye."

A surly "tuts," accompanied with a discontented jerk of the shoulder, and followed by a long-drawn snore or groan, was the only answer from the bed.

"Just stand back, my good lady," said the doctor, taking the patient's hand in his, and feeling the pulse with his eyes shut a good while. He then drew out his watch, and proceeded to note the rate of beating with a face of considerable excitement.

"Do ye think him very ill, sir?" inquired Mrs Artichoke.

"One moment, ma'am," returned the doctor, shaking head. "Till once we professional gentlemen have finished examination, we can say nothing, my good lady. What do you complain of, sir?" he continued, pressing his knuckles on Benjie's chest.

"The—tailor—cam—to—our—toun,
Wha kend—the way—to woo!"

"Ha! ha! my boy!" was the indistinctly drawled or sung response to the doctor's question.

"Has he been long insensible, ma'am?" inquired the doctor, looking very gravely, and putting his watch in his pocket.

"O sir!" said Mrs Artichoke, hesitatingly, "he's been"—But she was interrupted by the doctor asking her to help him to raise the patient to a sitting posture. They succeeded in this to a certain extent, when the doctor began rapping the chest like an intoxicated drummer, and then applied his ear to the patient's back.

Mrs Artichoke had, during this operation, been eyeing the *proceedings* in perfect amazement and alarm; and

this being the first time she had seen Dr Plyphleme professionally, it was with considerable effort that she summoned courage to repeat again—

“Dae you think him awfu’ ill, sir?”

“I—know—your—feelings very well, ma’am,” returned the doctor, somewhat displeased at being again interrupted; “but—wait till—after examination—if you please—my good lady.”

This reply frightened Mrs Artichoke completely, and she stood looking on in silence while the examination proceeded.

After fully satisfying himself, by all the different examinations and tests that he considered necessary, the doctor allowed the patient to lie, or rather fall, back into his former position; and taking hold of his arm again, he felt the pulsations for a few seconds, and consulted his watch very earnestly. He next began to pace the floor with long heavy strides, picked his nose very carefully, unbuttoned his waistcoat and buttoned it again, and after once more taking his patient’s hand, to make sure, he seemed to have made up his mind; and giving another turn through the house, he paused and shut his eyes, then slapping his hand on his forehead, he said—

“Well, my good lady, since you are no doubt anxious—ma’am—for the welfare of your husband, I may tell you, ma’am, that, after ex-am-in-a-tion, there appears to me to be not very much—or rather not a very great deal wrong;—but”—

“O sir, I’m glad to hear that, sir,” said Mrs Artichoke, joyfully; “for I was”——

“My good lady, my very good lady,” continued the doctor, hastily interrupting her; “one moment, ma’am—one moment, ma’am. I would say, my good lady, from my practical knowledge, and the result of my professional ex-am-in-a-tion, that though there is not a very great deal wrong, yet everything is not quite right with him; but the profession would not consider cases of

this kind dangerous, if they got no worse." He took the arm again, and after considering a little, he went on to say—"I think, my good lady, though a little light powder might be of service, or even a small allowance of castor-oil might do considerable good, or a blister might tend to his relief, or even a few leeches applied might have a beneficial effect, yet I would candidly say, ma'am, that I would prefer bleeding with the lancet, as a good and as safe a means as could be used, my good lady."

Having thus delivered his opinion of the case, he with great expedition stripped off his coat, tucked up his sleeves, selected a lancet from his pocket-book, and proceeded to bind up the arm.

Mrs Artichoke stood eyeing these preparations with silent terror, as she was afraid to speak after having been so often stopped short; yet she internally wished that she had never seen his face, if that was what he was to be after.

Holding a basin under the arm, the doctor applied the keen instrument to the vein, and a copious discharge of blood soon followed.

The doctor eyed it with apparent satisfaction as it flowed into the basin; and after the vessel was about half full, or what the doctor said "the profession would consider a fair quantity," he bound up the wound, and ordered the blood to be retained for his inspection on the following day.

After washing his hands and replacing his coat, he produced from his pocket-book a small powder, which he gave directions should be divided into five parts, and one-half of each given every time the patient should awake, if he should not be visibly improving.

These instructions having been repeated over by Mrs Artichoke, to make sure she understood them thoroughly, the doctor administered a word or two of comfort to her, and advised her to keep her mind as easy as possible, under the circumstances, basing this recom-

mentation on the ground that there was no positive or real cause for immediate alarm. To make this more emphatic and impressive, he tapped her very gently on the shoulder with his riding-whip during its delivery, and asked her several times whether she clearly understood his meaning, as he did not wish her absolutely to conclude there was *no danger at all* in the case.

Leaving instructions to send for him if the patient grew any worse, as it was likely he would require more bleeding in such an event, the doctor took his departure, promising to look in next morning, to see if all progressed favourably, or whether recourse to the lancet would be again necessary.

CHAPTER IV.

Is he to carry a' before him?
No; wer't but for the variorum,
Instead of being death and life
That urges me to seek the strife,
I do declare, I'll show resistance,
Though you deny me your assista

MRS ARTICHOKE was astir early the morning following what has just been related; and having lit the fire, and hting up the kettle to boil water for breakfast, she set off to acquaint her friend Mrs Curmuddie with what had taken place the preceding night, and to get her advice as to what she should do and what she should say to the doctor next visit; for she was rather alarmed at the prospect of another bleeding, and felt sure that if the doctor should propose it, she would not have the courage to prevent him. She also felt considerable uneasiness at the prospect of her husband encountering the doctor professionally, as she knew he entertained no great liking for him in any capacity whatever. Indeed, she regretted exceedingly that she had allowed herself to get so alarmed, and was sorry that the doctor had been called in at all; for her husband had slept so well during the night that she felt assured he would awake quite a new man, so far at least as his present distress was concerned. These things perplexed her a good deal, or as she termed it herself, she was "a' through-ither," by the time she got to Mrs Curmuddie's.

"I'm sure," said Mrs Curmuddie, after she had heard the *matter fully stated*, "I really wonder what the sorry

way ye let the great big iggerant horse bluid the pair man. My haith! he had little need o' that; and I think ye surely micht hae kenn'd that it was jist the wee drap extra speerits that had turned his stamack; for it's no the first time ye've seen him wi' a wee drap, axin' yer pardon for sayin't; but I wadna thocht, after a', that ye wad hae been saft enough to let the stot bluid him."

"Od, woman; I ken I was saft," returned Mrs Artichoke; "but I was sae frichtit, I didna like to say onything; for he terrified me sae wi' his glowrs and gestures, that I almost lost the power o' speakin', an' scarce said a word; and only little I did say, he didna look at a' pleased at. And when I began to tell him aboot Benjie, he stoppit me before I said almost twa words; and I daresay he didna even ken the man had a dram, unless he fand the smell o't; but he was hostin' an' snivellin' at sic a fearfu' rate through his big nose, that I didna think he fand it at a'. To tell ye the truth, it was the ill-colour'd face Benjie had on, mair than the bit dram, that set me in sic a way aboot him; but if I had haen ony thocht, I needna hae let that pit me sair aboot; for it was naither mair nor less than jist the bleck off some pocks o' soot they brocht in the cart aside him, to scatter on the things in the garden; and it never strack my head, till I saw them at the door when I cam awa the noo, that it was off them!"

"Lord bless us, woman!" said Mrs Curmuddie, with considerable warmth, "I wonder a man like that can set his face up for bein' a doctor at a'. Nae doot, he's maybe guid enough for a cryin' wife, or the like o' that, when he kens what's the matter; but for ither compliments, when ye canna tell what's vrang yersel', he's waur than naebedy. There's nae farer gaen than yestreen, after ye gaed awa hame frae seein' me, he ca'd aboot the wean, as somebody had sent for him in the hurry, when the bairn was ta'en oot the barrel, but he *hadna happen'd to be at hame*. I asked him to come

in, an' tak a look o' the crater; an' I began tellin' him aboot what was vrang, but he stoppit me whan I had got the length o' sayin' that the bairn had fa'n on his head in the water, an' the cruel monster began to chirt and squeeze the puir thing at a fearfu' rate, an' to say it was the water i' the head that ail'd it; and what think ye? He wanted to shave the bairn's croun, an' clap a slaiger o' mustard on't, which micht hae put the wean oot its wuts; but I stuck up, and wadna let him; for I mindit how he did whan auld Sawdust the wricht fil't his stamack wi' the haggis. He scrapit a' the hair off the puir man's head, an' stuck it owre wi' leeches; and tho' little was said aboot it by auld Sawdust, as the doctor pits a guid wheen coffins his road, it wasna likely I was gaun to let my wean be sair'd the same airt, afore my lookin' een; sae he gaed aff in the huff."

"Ye serv'd him richt," returned Mrs Artichoke; an' I'm sure I wish ye had been aside me last nicht, Mrs Curmuddie, for I hardly ken't what to dae. He left ane o' his bits o' dirt o' poothers, an' tell't me to mak it into five, an' gie my guidman a pickle every time he wauken'd. I tried to gie him't ance, but it was dry like stour, an' I think it didna gang owre his throat; for he wadna waukin' up, an' I had jist to rin't into his mouth the best way I could."

"I wadna hae thocht," returned Mrs Curmuddie, "that ye wad hae been sae far left to yersel' as gien yer puir man ony o' auld Potiphar's trash. A bit hair o' the dog that bit him wad hae been the thing for him; but a body's aye wise ahint the hand. The fack is, I really wonder tae see folk rin an' ca' in a doctor for every sma' trouble that taks them. Losh bless me, woman! I turn'd unco ill mysel' the ither nicht; but I didna flee awa for ony o' yer doctor crew (and tho' auld Potiphar was here last nicht, it wasna my daein' aither), but jist stappit my feet into a cog o' water, and took a *bit moderate* mouthfu' o' warm speerits, an'

slippit awa tae my bed; an' as sune as ever I began to aspire, I got better direckly!"

"Losh, woman! ye're a skeelie body," returned Mrs Artichoke; "but when I saw my guidman bockin' an' hickin', wi' his een still'd in his head, an' gapin' like tae choke, it never strack me tae try onything for him, an' I jist sent for the doctor, for fear o' reflections; but noo when I think on't, I was most awfu' doited tae let his brucket, coomy face pit me sae muckle aboot, and never tae mind o' the soot that I had gien them sic strick orders tae be sure an' no forget. At ony rate, noo when it's dune, I wad fain houp he'll be nane the waur o' the drap bluid that's been ta'en frae him; but I'm dootin' he'll be in a awfu' way at me, for bein' the cause o't."

"I'll jist fling a bit dud o' a shawl round my head," said Mrs Curmuddie, "an' gang awa down wi' you to see how he's keepin'; and if auld Potiphar comes up, we'll gie him something to gust his gab wi'. My certie! he'll no seek to try ony mair o' his bluidin' cantrips when he sees me in the house."

"Jist do sae, like a guid woman," said Mrs Artichoke, exceedingly pleased; "an' I'll maybe hae't in my power to recompense you for't some ither way; for I tak it doubly kind o' you leavin' yer ain house an' gaun down wi' me when yer ain wean's no weel."

"Tut! tut! tut!" said Mrs Curmuddie; "nane o' yer nonsense about recompensin' an' thae havers. My bairn's a' weel eneugh again, sin' I gied him the tate o' sinney; an' he took his parritch this mornin' a' the better o' wantin' his supper last nicht. And as for leavin' the house, it doesna matter the least; for there's nane o' the weans oot o' their beds yet; so I'll jist throw the key in the door, an' pit it up in the thack, where my dochter 'ill ken to get it, if she comes hame before me, and then we'll be stappin'."

The two "canny women" reached their destination as *Benjie* awoke, and were just in time to hear him

asking at the children where their mother was, and the answer they returned, that she was "here."

"See if ye can gie me a drink, Mysie," he growled as his wife entered, "an' look alive aboot it. Ye're aye rakin' an' clashin' some gaet or ither when I want onything," he continued, turning his eyes on Mrs Curmuddie, who withstood his stare without finching.

"Jist haud your wheesht nae, my canny loun," said Mrs Curmuddie, "an' no begin that way. Ye've got a partickler kind wife, and it ill sets you to begin flytin' an' ragin' at that rate, for her fetchin' in a obleegin' neebor to speer for you; an' the best o't is, ye gie nane o' the twa o' them ony thanks aither, but say they've been awa clashin'; that's a story an' a half."

"Weel, weel; whatever ye've been daein'," he replied, a little more pleasantly, "I wish to peace ye would gie me a mouthfu' o' water, for I never fand sic a deevil o' a taste in my life. It's jist as if some nasty dirt was stickin' in the pap o' my hass, an' I can hardly keep frae spewin'; sae if ye've onything in the bottle, ye can pit a cinder in't, to pit the dwaams aff me."

"Na, na, guidman! ye'll get nae cinders this mornin'," said Mrs Artichoke; "we had plenty o' yer cinderin' wark last nicht. I hinna got sic a fleg this lang while; for a' the times ever I saw ye hae a wee drap, ye ne'er was sae sair forjaskit, nor lookit sae bad as ye did last nicht."

"I dinna think ever I saw you get on the same aither," said he; "but let me see my drink as is is, if ye'll no pit a weetin' in't."

He took the jug in his hand, and raised himself up to drink, when his eye alighted on the basin with the blood in it, which stood on the table.

"What the deevil's that ye've got in the basin there?" he inquired rather hurriedly. "I've been dreamin', noo when I mind, aboot a lot o' fechtin' and hittin' an' things o' that kind; but that surely couldna be me, for *I'm no a fechtin' man*. Whaur cam't frae?"

Mrs Artichoke looked first at Mrs Curmuddie, next at the blood, and then at her husband, then from her husband to Mrs Curmuddie, but said nothing.

"Can ye no tell me withoot as mony looks and whee-jees?" he inquired again, rather angrily.

"Jist keep yersel' a wee thocht quieter, my merry lad, an' no gang an' mak yersel' ill, an' need to be bled again," said Mrs Curmuddie.

"'Bled again!' 'bled again!'" said he, starting; "ye dinna mean to say that bluid cam frae me? Stop a wee," he continued, "I thocht I fand my arm stiff;" and turning up the sleeve of his shirt, he saw the bandage round his arm, and began to take out the pins which held it on.

"Noo! noo! noo!" cried both ladies at once, rushing forward, and seizing his hand. "Losh preserve us! dinna gang to lowse awa the banditches, an' bluid yersel' tae dead."

"Noo, I want nane o' yer nonsense," said he, sitting more erect, and rubbing his eyes. "Jist tell me at ance wha did this, an' what it a' means."

"The doctor will tell ye himsel', for he's to be here to see ye in a wee gliff," said Mrs Artichoke.

"Mercy me! and has Dr Plyphleme really been here?" he inquired, with much consternation.

"We sent for him last nicht, whan ye was ravin' in agony," replied his wife.

"And did the great big iggerant loober really gang and bluid a man because he happen'd to hae got a wee drap whisky?" cried he, with great vehemence. "Has he never seen a man before that had got three half-mutchkins an' twa bottles o' yill? and dae ye mean tae say that ye didna ken yersel' what was up? Na, na! this is some o' yer tricks ye've been playin' me. I'll pit up wi' nae sich fudgigraphy; but if it is as ye say, I'll gie auld Potiphar his ammous in a way he'll no like, *if he ever sets his big, braid, ugly face within my door again.*"

"Ye'll dae perfetly richt if ye dae," said Mrs Curmuddie; "an' it wad but serve him richt tae send his daein's, the last twa days, through the toun wi' the bellman. He deserves to catch't frae ye; an' I'll gie ye my word that I'll help ye, an' no stand on nae stappin'-stanes wi't naither; but ye maunna blame yer wife, puir body, for she did it a' for the best."

"O dear me!" said Mrs Artichoke, "I hope nane o' ye'll kick up a dust wi' the doctor when he comes to the house, for I'm perfet terrified at the thochts o't. I dinna heed sae muckle for my guidman blamin' me; but the doctor 'ill be giein' me a' the wyte o't, because I was the ane that sent for him."

"An' what the sorry does't matter supposin' he should?" said Mrs Curmuddie. "The deevil a bit, as I should say sae, if ever I saw sic a fear'd body a' my born days."

The doctor just arrived, and tied his horse to a tree, and came into the house as Mrs Curmuddie finished speaking.

"Well, my good lady, how has your husband passed the night?" he inquired, a frown gathering on his face when he observed Mrs Curmuddie.

"He's a deevilish sicht the waur o' *your* capers," replied Benjie, angrily; "an' I wad like tae ken what ye mean by comin' an' bluidin' the sowl oot o' a body wi' ony o' ye cursed lances, or ither haglin' dirty?"

"From the state the gentleman is in at present," said the doctor, addressing Mrs Artichoke, and looking very much surprised, "the disease seems to have taken an unfavourable turn, ma'am. Why did you not let me know? Has the gentleman been long in this raving state?"

"Ye had as weel keep quite, doctor, and no rouse him," interposed Mrs Curmuddie; "for he's a fair deevil when his anger'd, though a canny enugh man if naebody meddles wi' him; and I think he's had plenty *at your hand a'ready* without ony mair."

"My good lady," said the doctor, very much displeased, "I daresay you are a very nice lady; but when a gentleman of my profession is in the house, you've no right to speak, my good lady."

"Them that 'will tae Cupar maun tae Cupar,'" returned Mrs Curmuddie, speaking at the top of her voice. "Gie him a het cowin', Mr Archychok, since he's sae obsternate. It'll dae him guid, if it drives some o' the consait oot o' the mule."

"Mercy on us a'! wheesht! wheesht!" cried Mrs Artichoke, "and dinna mak a community in the house. Keep quiet, Mrs Curmuddie, for ony favour; an' diinna you anger the doctor, guidman."

"I wonder to hear ye speak about angerin' the doctor," cried he. "If the big iggerant tatie has ony thing to be angry at, he's richt free will to be't; but I dinna think he has ony cause to compleen at bein' ta'en owre the coals for his persumption in bluidin' ony dacent man that's"——

"Will you speak in that style to me, sir?" cried the doctor, in a fury. "How dare you use these words to a gentleman of my profession?"

"I'll 'gentleman o' my profession' ye, ye bluidthristy keelie," cried Mrs Curmuddie, shaking her closed hand and her head in concert. "I'll spread yer weel-earned title o' a stupid cuddy-ass through the hale country. Think what wad happen'd my puir bairn, if I hadna keepit my ain grund an' prevented it! I wonder if the like o' you thinks that folk's gaun tae hae the lifes Providence gies them drain'd oot o' their bodies wi' ony auld blunderin' vratch like you! If there's no them i' the place that can fetch anither doctor, since we've lost our ain ane, we'll gang oot the parish for some ither body tae attend us; unless we want to be bled to dead, then we've naething mair to dae than get ye syne. Ye're fit enough for that, or to mak ony body that's weel turn ill, or them that's ill turn waur; but for *ony body bein' the better o' ye, there's nae*"——

"Mercy on us! haud yer tongue, Mrs Curmuddie," cried Mrs Artichoke, imploringly. "What's folk that's passin' tae think, hearin' sic a din in the house?"

"I see there's no use my standing here," said the doctor, "to be"——

"No, there's unco little," cried Benjie, sitting up very determined-looking. "That's the only wise word ye've said sin' ye cam in; and the quicker ye cut yer stick the better for you. Yer confounded nonsense 'ill keep me aff wark for guid-kens-hoo-lang."

"Stick in, Mr Archychok!" cried Mrs Curmuddie. "Gie him't tichtly when ye're at it! walk in!"

"Really, really," said the doctor, very angrily, "I never heard"——

"I'll 'really, really' ye!" cried Mrs Curmuddie, shaking her hand very near the doctor's face.

"I daresay ye 'never!'" roared Benjie, taking up the doctor's interrupted sentence. "Gad, I'll 'never' ye."

"Guid save us a', doctor!" said Mrs Artichoke, taking him by the arm, and pressing him in the direction of the door, "awa ye go, for ony favour."

"If he's sae very fond o' our company, let him tak his time; dinna hurry him. Maybe he wants tae tak a wee drap mair bluid frae ye," said Mrs Curmuddie, tauntingly, as she observed that the doctor looked very much chagrined.

"Let him gang, and be hanged!" roared Benjie. "We've had enough o' him."

The doctor seemed to think so too. He quickly reached the door, and mounting his horse, rode off, leaving them to pass what further remarks they pleased, for he perhaps thought he had heard more than "the profession would consider a fair quantity."

CHAPTER V.

Now but and ben the change-house fills
Wi' yill-caup commentators.
Here's cryin' oot for bakes and gills,
And there the pint-stoup clatters.

Burns.

THE melancholy death of Dr Boltpill, as alluded to in the conversation between Mrs Curmuddie and Mrs Artichoke, soon became generally known, and the report spread far and near; and almost before his body was consigned to the grave, other gentlemen of the same profession were making inquiries as to the practice likely to be obtained, in the event of their coming to occupy the place of the deceased.

One active medical man would have been enough for the extent of the district, and Dr Plyphleme might have greatly extended his circle of patronage on this occasion; but, unfortunately for him, it happened that he was far from being a favourite, either privately or professionally, with the greater part of the populace of the neighbourhood. This want of confidence was entirely to be attributed to the numberless mistakes into which he was always falling in the exercise of his profession; and though a few of the older people of the place, who had always been his friends, chiefly because they had neither required his professional assistance, nor seen sufficient reason to doubt his skill, might have placed every reliance upon him had they required his help, yet the greater number stood in terror at the *thought* of falling into his hands, when afflicted with *any of "the ills that flesh is heir to."* This was through

fear that the remedy should prove worse than the disease, as frequently happened; for it was next to certainty, if the doctor was called in, that the lancet or leeches would be applied unsparingly, whatever might be the nature of the complaint of the sufferer.

Though matters fully as awkward as that of the bleeding of Artichoke, the gardener, and that about the water of the head alluded to by Mrs Curmuddie, had occurred before, yet these taking place at the time they did, were caught up very eagerly by the anti-Plyphlemes, and made the most of against poor unfortunate Potiphar, so much so, that even some of his most enthusiastic patrons were not a little shaken in their opinions of his infallibility.

The tactics of Dr Boltpill, his former colleague, had been rather if anything too much the opposite way; but the people did not generally object so much to his mode of treatment, preferring the internal appliances—which Dr Boltpill always assured the takers would do no harm, if they did no good—to the blisters and the like energetic measures which Dr Plyphleme was always certain to have recourse to in almost all cases.

Some of the more important people of the village, feeling alarmed at the prospect of being left, in their troubles, to the tender mercies of Dr Plyphleme, resolved to set about getting a successor to Dr Boltpill appointed from among those that offered, and were canvassing for preferment.

At the instigation of Mr Tawse, the parish school-master, and in his own opinion the most important man in the place, in conjunction with Mr Skeldrin, the tenant of Thistle Ha', and particular friend of Mr Tawse; Mr Butterscales, the chief grocer; Mr Chizzle, the builder, and a few of the more consequential farmers, butchers, and others in the neighbourhood, the candidates were requested to procure testimonials, and forward them to him, when the respective merits of each *would be considered*, and the gentleman who should be

deemed most eligible for the office appointed and supported.

Of course, in an important matter of this kind, it was necessary that the people of the village and neighbourhood should be made believe that they had a great influence in the choosing of their surgeon, however little they should have in reality. It was, therefore, agreed by Mr Tawse and the aforesaid gentlemen, who had taken the matter into their hands, that a meeting should be held at the "Cheerie Farmers," and that all the inhabitants who chose should be at liberty to attend, and say whatever they might think proper; but this license, though to all appearance very wide, virtually embraced only such opinions as did not run counter to those of Mr Tawse and his friends.

The landlord of the "Cheerie Farmers," for the purpose of accommodating the said meeting, kindly granted the use of one of his rooms gratis, knowing that a good deal more would be done "for the good of the house," by those who were likely to attend, than would compensate for his kindness.

On the day fixed for the meeting, Mr Tawse and the other gentlemen were on the spot before the hour appointed, enjoying their tumblers, and looking over the applications, and preparing the speeches with which they expected to startle and enlighten their hearers.

As the hour of meeting drew near, the room got pretty well filled with visitors, most of whom had come more for the purpose of partaking of what might be "going," than from any anxiety about the purpose of the meeting; and if the numerous and incessant calls for "go's" and bottles of ale, which were now set up on all sides, did not reach the landlord's expectations, it was pretty certain, from his pleased look, that the result was not a great deal under his calculation.

After a pretty liberal time had been allowed to admit *of the company* getting themselves made what they *called comfortable*, Dominie Tawse stood up, and begged

to propose the healths of the gentlemen who had honoured them with their presence at the meeting, and had no doubt they would, in their choice of a doctor, all agree to concur in appointing the one he and his friends had thought most worthy of the high position in which he was to be placed; and he hoped they would all do their best for the good of the one to be appointed; but notwithstanding that he wished their new doctor every success, he hoped that neither he nor any of his friends would have the misfortune to require the professional assistance of the doctor to be chosen.

Mr Tawse laughed very heartily at this himself, as he considered it a perfect masterpiece, and it was received by the meeting with a loud shout of approbation; and after they had all drained off the contents of their glasses, another more deafening yell was set up.

Mr Butterscales next rose up, rather confused-looking, and evinced a desire to address the meeting; and when the clamour had subsided a little, he proceeded to speak—

“Leddies an’”—he began, apparently at a loss for words. “Houts! nae leddies! what am I sayin’? It’s no that I mean at a’—I—wad—propose; no—I’ll not propose—I’ll—I mean—I wad say—No, I dinna mean that—I’m at a loss—Houts! I dinna ken what I wad say—This meetin’—tuts! I’ll sit down—I’ve seen the day when I could speak, but deevil a bit if I can dae’t noo. Gang on some o’ yersel’s.” So saying, he took off his glass, and sat down.

Mr Chizzle started up, evidently determined to outshine Mr Butterscales in his eloquence. At the moment that he rose, Benjie Artichoke did the same, and both began to speak at once; but the loud and vehement cries of “Archychok yet!” “Archychok yet!” “Stick in!” “He’s the boy!” fairly overcame Mr Chizzle, and he sat down considerably mortified, and looked at Mr Tawse, highly displeased that such a proceeding should have been permitted, though he was

perhaps nothing the worse situated, considering the very little he had ready to say, and the still less ability he had for saying it.

When the shouts and roars, which broke forth afresh when Mr Chizzle sat down, had died away, Mr Artichoke thus began—

“I was gaun tae say, my chieftains,” he said, scratching his head, and raising his glass, “that I’m deevilish gled, for ane, that we’re gaun tae get a new doctor; tho’ I wish, as Mr Tawse has said, that he never fingers a bawbee o’ mine. And as for you,” he continued, looking round the table, “I hope ye’ll a’ bide as healthy as my beds o’ young ingans, which are the bonniest I’ve seen the year, if ony o’ ye wanted twa-ree o’ them. But that’s no the thing the noo,—tho’ ye canna be muckle the waur aither o’ kennin’ whaur tae get them if they’re needed;—but I was gaun tae say, if ony o’ ye should hae a chance o’ pittin’ a job a doctor’s way, that ye’re no tae be gaun past the man ye’re bringin’, an’ gien’t tae that auld bluidsucker Plyphleme. I’ve said aboot a’ my say noo; for I’m nae speaker at a’; tho’, if ye wantit a sang, I’m the ane for that. But I think the happy faces round me wad be a’ the happier o’ anither glass in their cheeks; an’ as I’m wearyin’ for ane mysel’, I’ll jist be takin’ it an’ my sate at ance, which kills twa dogs wi’ ae bane.”

The “happy faces” received this proposal with unaffected applause, and immediately followed their friend’s example, and emptied their glasses with one consent, and directly called upon Benjie to sing the song he had volunteered.

To this Benjie offered no objections, and almost instantly began as follows :—

I’m nae teetotaller mysel’—
The set, I canna bear them;
Aye cryin’ oot against the dram,
I dinna like tae hear them.
But though I tak a glass mysel’,
And swallow it like winkin’,
I wadna aye jist like tae be
Dram, dram-drinkin’.

Gie me the chap wha takes a glass
 Withoot a fuss aboot it,
 And happy is tae snap it up—
 The same tae gang withoot it :
 And no like them wha hum and ha,
 And try tae set ye thinkin',
 Because they leav't, and dinna taste,
 They ne'er gae dram-drinkin'.

Their characters they think wad spoil,
 Did they but taste in viewin';
 But that it matters nae although
 They guzzle till their spewin',
 If they avoid the bein' seen,
 Wi' sneakin' sly and slinkin',
 Then it will ne'er be thoct that they
 Dae e'er gae dram-drinkin'.

The public-house auld wifie kens
 Their custom's worth the haein';
 And while they've siller in their pouch,
 Will ne'er think o' betrayin',
 Or tellin' hoo they aft will sit,
 Wi' een baith bleer'd and blinkin',
 Sae far gaen that they canna tak
 The dram they've ca'd for drinkin'.

Mr Chizzle rose again when the song was concluded, and commenced to speak, but only got the length of some indistinct allusions to free-stones and spirit-levels, when his voice was completely drowned amidst the noise set up by the meeting—some of whom began to sing, while others roared for silence, and others shouted for drink. He saw it was no use wasting words, so he sat down, and applied himself to preparing another tumbler, to keep up with the other members of the company, who were doing such infinite justice to the drink of every description. The formal speeches were now out of the question. Every one roared, sung, or whistled, to suit his own inclination; and in a very short time

“The mirth and fun grew fast and furious,”

and most uproarious yelling and squabbling reigned on all sides.

Mr Butterscales, who had partaken rather freely after the failure of his speech, had been half-asleep for a considerable time, and was beginning to enjoy his nap in perfection, when the door was opened, and his better-half entering, looked round the assemblage, and inquired, in rather an angry tone, "Is my auld daidlin' goose here?"

"Taste wi' me! taste wi' me! Mrs Butterscales!" cried several of the company at once; "a wee drap 'ill dae ye guid when ye're warm wi' rinnin'."

"Keep yer glasses an' trash oot o' my road," she returned, looking very sour, and speaking a degree or two sulkier, "or I'll maybe gie some o' ye a tastin' o' what ye'll be mair unwillin' tae keep. Ou ay," she continued, as she caught sight of her husband, "I see the auld snorin' effgy. I thocht he wad be amang ye. Stop till I get up tae him, an' I'll see if I can waukin' him." So saying, she forced a passage round to where her ill-fated husband sat, and taking him by the ears, gave him rather a rough shake, at the same time vociferating, in a most peremptory, gruff tone, "Simon! Simon!"

"Her well-known voice the hero heard,
He raised his sleep-closed eyes,"

and stammered mechanically, "I'll get the bread toasted, an' hae the kettle hung on in a minute, my dear."

"Get yersel' waukin' first, an' speak sense, ye lazy louterin'," she returned, shaking him a little rougher than before.

"Ye're in an awfu' hurry this mornin', my dear," returned the easy, good-natured man, a little awake, though still unconscious of his whereabouts; for the clamour and din had somewhat ceased on the entrance of his wife, and the proceedings were being watched with considerable attention.

"Does your wife make you licht the fire and mask the tea, old boy?" said Chizzle, the builder, as Mr Butterscales began to awake and look round.

"Jist keep you quiet, ye auld canker'd athert," replied Mrs Butterscales, addressing the last speaker. "It wad be weel for your puir wife, if she could gar you dæ the same, instead o' you trailin' her oot her bed by the hair o' the head, an' makin' the puir woman stay in the coal-neuk a' nicht, in terror o' her life, whan you gang hame on the spree. Ye wadna need to tak yer terrivees, an' throw the glasses wallop into the fire, if ye had me to deal wi'; sae jist keep a calm sough, or I'll maybe say mair than ye ettle." With this threat, she turned again to her husband, and took him by the arm, saying, in rather a more pleasant tone, and with a scowl of triumph at Mr Chizzle, "Come awa hame, my man! ye'll be weel oot o' the company o' sic reprobates as that auld stane-and-lime vagabond."

Mr Chizzle, though "half-seas over," and in his bravest mood for retaliation, seemed so conscious of the truth of Mrs Butterscales' remarks, and so thoroughly knocked on the head, that he kept silent, though aggravated in the extreme.

Mr Butterscales, knowing from former experience that the quieter he kept he would fare all the better on his reaching home, suffered himself without resistance to be raised upon his legs, when his careful wife got hold of him, and supported him the best way she could as he staggered from the room, unmindful of the showers of abuse poured on his head by his bottle companions.

"If it was me she was doing that with," said Mr Chizzle, gathering speech as the room door closed behind the interesting couple, "she wad find hersel' in the black-books, I doot."

"If it *were* I, Mr Chizzle; if it *were* I, my dear sir," said Mr Tawse, the rules of syntax rushing on his highly-grammatical mind. "You know the 'verb to be has the same case after it that it has before it,' Mr Chizzle. Not '*if it was me*;'—*if it was me's* bad grammar."

Mr Chizzle coloured a little at this; and though he felt disposed to assail the schoolmaster, he was a little

afraid to venture; but he had barely time to speak, when Mr Skeldrin looked over to Mr Tawse, and said,

"Ye'll have him well venterlated wi' grammar soon now, I think, Mr Tawse."

"I hope so, I hope so," replied Mr Tawse. "But you would be the better of a little yourself, I think, my dear sir. Ventilated, if you please; not '*venterlated*,' as you said. It's from *ventus*, *venti*, the Latin noun for wind, ye know; and the verb *fero*, *tuli*, *latum*, *ferre*, to bring or suffer. To bring the wind, is the meaning you observe."

"To bring the deevil, if you like," said Mr Skeldrin, in a furious tone. "Do ye think ye're in the schule the noo? Nane o' yer hang'd nonsense wi' me, mind I tell ye."

"Speak sense, then, my dear sir," said the aggravating dominie.

"Speak the deevil," returned Mr Skeldrin, getting upon his legs, at which Mr Tawse immediately started from the room, and with the greatest speed he was capable of mustering, he was soon on his way home, closely pursued by Mr Skeldrin, aided by a Mr Gobbler, his intended son-in-law, who threatened to take summary vengeance on Mr Tawse for having had the audacity to challenge the accuracy of anything said by Mr Skeldrin. It was perhaps well for Mr Tawse that he knew the road better than they did, and reached home in time to lock himself in, and escape their fury; but Mr Skeldrin was not quite so lucky, for he upset himself, in his hurry and eagerness, and got hurt a good deal.

The meeting eventually broke up without anything else very remarkable occurring, except that Mr Artichoke did not reach home so soon as was calculated on, and it was feared again that something had gone wrong with him; but "Robbie," who accompanied those who went to search for his master, found him fast asleep in a ditch, into which it was supposed he had slipped while *taking a nearer way* through the fields that separated

his house from the village. When awakened so far as to be able to speak, and with difficulty got upon his legs, his equilibrium was found to be in such a wavering condition, and his powers of locomotion so deranged, that in spite of his protestations that he was "always there," and "always ready," and that "nothing whatever was amiss," he was placed without difficulty on a hand-barrow, and conveyed home in safety; and though he was perhaps fully as ill this time as on an occasion which occurred not long before, it is almost needless to say that it was not thought requisite in this instance to call in Dr Plyphleme's assistance.

be consulted. Dr Plyphleme had been called in, and had pronounced the hand of Mr Skeldrin to be labouring under some derangement, which he took the pains to describe in the Latin language, with all the precision of an anatomical lecturer; and being his first visit to Thistle Ha', that style was quite new there, and so astounded Mrs Skeldrin, that even though she did not understand what was meant, she set the doctor down as a very learned man, and one that might be fully relied on as having a very proficient knowledge of her husband's ailments. The doctor, after satisfying himself as to the state of the injured arm, gave directions that a mixture of grease and tar should be kept constantly applied to it, and suggested, as the most approved mode of having this done thoroughly, that the arm should be inserted up to the elbow, in what is termed a "half-Wellington" boot, and that the grease and tar should then be gently heated and poured in, so as to keep the arm completely enveloped in the mixture, and firmly enclosed in it after it should get cool again. All this was carefully done; also a little blood taken from the other arm, for fear of fever; and a dozen of the most noxious powders which laboratory ever created left, one to be administered daily till the cure should be effected, or the application of some other remedy be rendered necessary.

Mr Skeldrin, rather against his will, had continued to follow up the advice of Dr Plyphleme for a few days; but finding himself no better, and the boot being a great inconvenience, he frequently threatened to remove it; but his wife with some difficulty prevailed on him to allow it to remain, and thereby avoid the woful consequences that might arise, if he disobeyed the orders of the doctor! With many grumblings, he consented to allow the application to remain a little longer, on condition of his wife's allowing him to discontinue the *powders*, which she agreed to do without molesting him, *after he should have taken half the number prescribed.*

Going on in this way drove Mr Skelkrin quite out of all patience; and on the arrival of Dr Golloch in the parish, against the violent expostulations of his wife, who was so much delighted with Dr Plyphleme, and so confident of his great ability, that she would hardly hear of any other coming in his place, he insisted that he would have his own will for once, and get in the new doctor; so Mrs Skeldrin was forced to consent, and doctor Golloch was accordingly summoned to attend.

Mrs Skeldrin's confidence in Dr Plyphleme's skill was much shaken at seeing the manner in which his applications were treated and ridiculed by Dr Golloch, who extricated the arm from its leather covering; and on examination, ascertained that dislocation of the joint of the wrist had been the cause of Mr Skeldrin's inability to use the hand from the time of the accident. This being the case, Dr Golloch set about reducing it; and so successful were his efforts, that Mr Skeldrin declared, after the doctor had done, and bandaged up the arm, that he felt quite a new man, and that he would be able to take a tumbler of toddy with comfort—a luxury in which he had never indulged with any freedom from the time of meeting with the injury. The adjusting and fastening up of the injured limb had just been completed, when Dr Plyphleme was observed from the window to be making his way up to the house in his usual haste. Both Mr and Mrs Skeldrin looked exceedingly awkward; but they had no time to fabricate proceedings, as Dr Plyphleme was immediately admitted into the room where they were.

Mrs Skeldrin made an attempt at an introduction, of which the only audible words were "Plyphleme" and "Golloch;" but Dr Plyphleme's face showed that he was in anything but a good humour, and he took no notice whatever of what was said; but as his eye rested on the boot which had just been taken from Mr Skeldrin's arm, he inquired very angrily, "Do you require

the attendance of two professional gentlemen in this case, ma'am?"

Mrs Skeldrin looked to her husband, expecting him to reply to this inquiry; but he either did not hear it, or felt unable to answer, at any rate he looked particularly ill at ease, and said nothing at all.

"This is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting with Dr Plyphleme," said Dr Golloch, with a view to breaking the embarrassment, into which the entrance of Dr Plyphleme had thrown them;—but at hearing his rival speak, Dr Plyphleme scowled very disdainfully, and without allowing Dr Golloch time for saying more, he turned full upon him, and said,—

"I'm afraid, sir, that there will be very little 'pleasure' in the matter; there is no occasion whatever for any, sir. I have merely called to see my patient, sir; and have nothing to say to any other party."

"This gentleman is *my* patient, sir," returned Dr Golloch, not wishing to appear over-awed; "and there is no occasion for your interference in the case. Had it been anything requiring professional consultation, I would have been most happy; but under the"—

"There is no need of this whatever, sir; don't address me, sir," said Dr Plyphleme, interrupting him.

"I hope this won't cause either of you gentlemen any annoyance," said Mrs Skeldrin, who had now recovered her power of speech. "These awkward and disagreeable matters will, I hope"—

"Don't distress yourself in the least, my good lady," said Dr Plyphleme; "you need not trouble yourself at all, ma'am. If my good sir has thought proper to request other attendance, I have nothing more to say in the matter, my good lady. Good afternoon, ma'am." So saying, he left the room, to the great relief of Mr Skeldrin, who, after the doctor's back was turned, slowly began to regret that he had not given him a thorough blowing up, for having put him to such *barbarous treatment*.

Dr Golloch stayed to tea, and Mrs Skeldrin was quite enraptured with his company, and very highly pleased to observe that he paid, as she thought, marked attention to her daughter Jeanie; and before tea was over, she had set him down as a man infinitely superior, in every respect, to Mr Gobbler, the already-referred-to suitor of her daughter, who had been and still was making advances, though without much progress, as Jeanie entertained anything but a liking for him. As her father, however, had a very high opinion of this Mr Gobbler, and considered him a most eligible match in every sense, he had insisted on his daughter paying him proper respect, and treating him as her lover. She, from this, had been in a way obliged, for the sake of her own quiet and comfort, to treat him with some little civility, in the dread of incurring her paternal displeasure, with a large share of which she had been liberally threatened, in the event of her going against his wishes and commands.

After tea, which was served in the best style of the house, and in Mrs Skeldrin's favourite china into the bargain, the toddy was set down, when Mr Skeldrin quite forgot his arm, and protested he had never been so well in his life.

Mrs Skeldrin and Jeanie both felt very happy and comfortable; but this was doomed to be of but short duration, for almost before the first tumbler had been finished, the doctor was summoned to attend professionally in another quarter, and had to take his departure from Thistle Ha', not perhaps without some reluctance. But he could not delay, and the pressing entreaties of Mr Skeldrin, to stop and join him with another tumbler, had to be disregarded.

CHAPTER VII.

We'll hae our say, though our remarks
Will neither be owre sair ;
Nor will we lift him to the sky,
Till ance we ken him mair :
For you and me's leev'd lang eneugh
To ken the ills and dangers
That folk hae aft been landed in,
Through tamperin' wi' strangers.

It was not to be supposed that while all in the parish were astir, either paying compliments to their new doctor, or passing remarks and criticisms upon him, that our two friends, Mrs Curmuddie and Mrs Artichoke, were to permit him to slip through their fingers without a word to be said either about him generally, in his favour, or against him. No; that was not to be expected, and as well not; for he had not been many days in the place till Mrs Artichoke went on a visit to Mrs Curmuddie, for the express purpose of hearing what she had seen or heard of the doctor, and to communicate what had come under her own notice, and what she had been able to learn otherwise about him, so that they might compare notes, and assist each other on any point where deficiency of information concerning him might exist. We will, therefore, leave the doctor in the meantime, to attend to his own matters, while we hear what Mrs Curmuddie and her friend had to say about him, as his interim doings and the general public opinion regarding him may be perhaps gathered from their discourse as well as in any other way; and considering the research *and trouble they put themselves to in almost all matters,*

their opinions and remarks are, to some extent, perhaps entitled to deference.

"What about this new blichen, then, they've brocht for a doctor?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie of Mrs Artichoke, before she had well got time to sit down. "Hae ye seen him at a', or heard ony feck aboot him? For my part, tho' my dochter's wi' him, I've ne'er gotten a richt look o' him yet, an' hae only seen him through the window on his horse; but he was gaun by at the tap gallop at the time, an' I couldna mak head or tail o' what he was like."

"Seen him!" returned Mrs Artichoke, with an air of great importance. "Ay; there's fient a doot but I've seen him, an' mair nor ance tae, an' spokin' tae him an' a'; what think ye o' that? Bless ye, woman!" she continued, nudging her companion on the arm, to make her attention more alive to the importance of what was coming, "it was my man that brocht up his boxes and gibbles the day he cam, an' he's been in our house twa-three times since, an' unco frank an' cracky."

"Ye'll no be muckle the fatter o' that, sae far's I can see," returned Mrs Curmuddie, not altogether well pleased that Mrs Artichoke was so far ahead of her. "But what kind o' a vratch is he, an' what sort a jigger is he tae speak tae, you that's seen sae awfu' muckle o' him?"

"Ou, he looks an unco easy sort o' mortal," replied Mrs Artichoke; "an' I daresay no a ill chiel, through the piece; but I dinna think it'll raise his credit among the nabs, if he's as free a' gaet he gangs, as when he is at our house."

"The deil a fears," returned Mrs Curmuddie. "Ye needna distress yoursel' sair there. Nae doot, he'll hae a way for the nabs, an' ane for the like o' us tae; an' if he should be a thocht free wi' us, it will only be tae answer his ain ends. Nae mistak, he's the knack o' the nabs tae; for my lassie tells me that his door never tooma wi' folk ca'in' an' speerin' after him. But then the bodiea

hereawa are a' sae unco easy ta'en up wi' triumph, that there's little use heedin' them. I've heard tae, that the folk's beginnin' already tae say that some o' the young lassies are settin' their caps at him, tho' the man's hardly weel in the place. But," she continued, with great modesty, "the folk are a' unco ready wi' their clatter, tho' the thing's like eneugh tae, and I dinna misdoot it mysel'; for ye ken the hizzies hereawa are unco glaikit, an' no like what we were in our younger days, Mrs Archychok. I daresay there's plenty o' them wad think him a great windfa', an' wad jump at him like a cock at a grossart; but they may weel set, for he'll no be like his country a'thegither, if he sells his hen in a rainy day, tak ye my word for that. But tae be sure, he has a guid job by the hand, if he can keep it; an' that should gang a far way tae recommend him tae a guid match, if any o' our upsettin' wasps can be ca'd that. My lassie tells me he's a guid maister, an' that's aye something. Ye hinna tell't me onything o' his looks yet; an' she hadna time tae tell me a' I wanted tae ask, the wee bit gliffies that I've seen her."

"I dinna think," returned Mrs Artichoke, "that his looks are onything tae brag o' at a', ony mair nor mine; for he's jist a wee, dumpy, brucket, black-a-vised crater, wi' a lang beard like a billy-goat. But for a' that, it's no tae say that he looks unco ill aither; for he's raal tidy wi' his claes, an' is jist dressed like a magazine; an' ye ken yersel' it's a shauchlin' body the like o' that winna improve. Frae his way o' speakin', an' what I've heard him sayin', I wadna exackly set him down as a perfet dungeon o' cleverness; yet he has no a ill stock o' gab when dune. I think, owre the piece, he's jist a gie queer hairum-scairum sort o' loon; an' I'm cheated, if he doesna aither turn oot a deil or a daw. But we'll hae tae wait a wee afore we can say muckle aboot him."

"Has he ony feck tae dae at a' that ye hear tell o'?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie. "I think my lassie was *sayin' he's no very muckle at hame.*"

"I hinna heard o' onything very partickler," returned Mrs Artichoke; "but he's been fleein' about here an' there scrapin' acquaintance (or gettin' interduced, as he ca's it), an' my laddie, wha's been gaun his rounds wi' him, tells me the folk are a' unco weel-pleased wi' him, an' in a terrible funk about him some places; an' he's no very mim-mou'd, and disna stand on nae stappin'-stances about makin' acquaint wi' a' he fa's in wi, and stoppin' tae crack."

"O, I dinna doot," returned Mrs Curmuddie, "but he'll maybe get as much tae dae as he can weel set his face tae; and frae what they careters o' his in his bit bookie o' testimonies say, he should be gie able tae ken what tae dae wi' folk when they're compleenin'. But maybe his careters are like some ither folk's anes that you and me could name, Mrs Archychok, and dinna look ony the waur o' bein' on paper."

"No, I daresay no," returned Mrs Artichoke. "But we maunna be haurlin' him sae sair owre the coals aither, nae, for things we can say but little or naething about;—but, at ony rate, thae young whipper-snappers are at a' events no sae much tae trust tae as auld stagers, wha hae seen mair o' the warld. But tho' the man's young, that's a faut aye mendin', an' we shouldna jist tak a' thing by the crookit handle; for wha can say, but if the chap was ance married, an' richt settled down, he may turn oot a credit tae the place yet?"

"I wadna gainsay that a' doctors should be married men," said Mrs Curmuddie; "but ye see single anes get on weel enough tae—at least, it's been sae wi' auld Plyphleme, wha has made a pour o' siller wi' his lances and blisters; and let this lad get married when he likes, it cheats me if he disna get mair tae dae as lang's he's single, than he'll get tae dae if he had a wife—at least, till sich a time as he gets oot o' date by the course o' natur, which 'ill naither be the day nor the morn; an' I think he'll be the very ane tae ken that, an' see it's his interest tae keep as he is for a gie wee."

"If he hisna got a wife lookit oot already," said Mrs Artichoke, "and should think o' takin' ane frae round about hereawa, it'll mak a unco envy an' ill-will, ye'll see, afore they get it a' settled. My laddie's sayin' that he's makin' mair errands than's needfu' tae Thrissle Ha', an' that he's unco in favour wi' the auld folk there since he sorted the guidman's hand; an' the servants hae been speakin' aboot it, as if he has an e'e after the dochter. Folk disna ken for the truth o't; but, at ony rate, there's ae thing sure enough, that he's there braw an' often, an' Willie has whyles a bonny wait for him when he gangs in an' sits down. But he maks a guid maister, an' Willie likes him raal weel, an' never grudges tae stop a bitty on him ony gaet, an' far less there; for he's aye sure o' gettin' a dram, an' a guid junt o' cheese an' bread sent oot tae him by the dochter's orders. That looks weel; for ye ken, as Allan Ramsay says, if folk minds the dog, it's aye a guid sind they care for them that's aught it."

"Ou, I believe he's a guid, kind maister," returned Mrs Curmuddie; "Katie said that hersel'. But, losh woman! I dinna think there 'ill be muckle truth in that ye're sayin' aboot the lassie what-ye-may-ca'-her; for ye mind the clatter was gaun jist no lang syne, that somebody owre aboot Blawdreary had been stickin' in very bricht, an' hae'n't a' his ain way; but I never heard whether they were like tae mak it oot. They were sayin' she wasna quite sae bonny on't as he was; an' if that's true, there may be something o' this, but I never could hear richt aboot it."

"I hae heard as muckle mysel'," returned Mrs Artichoke; "but I never had opportunity o' hearin' exackly; for I'm no very weel acquent wi' ony o' the folk aither aboot Blawdreary or Thrissle Ha', tho' we'll likely hear something sune. But, losh me! it's gettin' on, an' I daresay ye'll be thinkin' I'm daft tae stand here claverin' an' keepin' you frae yer wark; an' it's aboot time, at *ony rate*, that I was stappin', for I had nae thocht o'

stoppin' quite sae lang, when I took the chance tae slip owre tae see ye."

"Na, na, na! Mrs Archychok!" said Mrs Curmuddie, placing herself between her friend and the door, to which she was about to make her way, "that 'ill no dae. D'ye think I'll let ye awa this way without tastin', an' you aye sae jonteel wi' me when I gie you a ca'? Na, na! lass! that's no the way I dae wi' folk that's guid tae me. Ye were in sic a flooster the last time ye were up, that I was dung a' through-ither, an' didna mind tae offer ye a tastin'; but ye're no gaun the length o' yer muckle tae oot here the day till ye tak a bit mouthfu' wi' me."

"Hoot-toot-oot!" responded Mrs Artichoke, "there's nae use o' ye bein' at that bathin the noo."

"Jist sit ye doun there nae, an' no anither word oot o' yer head," returned Mrs Curmuddie. "Ye're a mensefu' body yersel', an' ye shouldna hinder yer freends frae haein' a wee bit o' their ain will in their ain house."

"Ye're an awfu' kind body," said Mrs Artichoke, sitting down, and looking as pleased as ever she had done in her life.

"Dae ye say a wee drap water, Mrs Archychok?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie, filling up a glass.

"No, no," returned Mrs Artichoke; "I dinna improve o' mixin' thae things at a'; for they're best tae my taste in their nat'ral state,—unless it be a bit skeegin' o' sugar at a time!"

"Ye've get that, my woman," said Mrs Curmuddie, producing a paper bag containing some sugar, and putting into the glass with her fingers what she considered the proper quantity. "I dinna like ony o' the mixer-maxter wark mysel', and wadna gie a guid, stiff stark-naked mouthfu' for ony o' a' the ways there is o' takin't. No tae say that either you or me's partickler fond o' the thing; but a wee drap does us baith guid, an' we're a' the better o' a bit tastin' when we ken it does us nae harm. Sae jist you try that, Mrs Archychok."

"Hech keep me! but that's awfu' stuff," said Mrs Artichoke, after the subsiding of a fit of coughing into which she had fallen on taking rather a rash mouthful of the mixture. "I hinna tasted the like o' that for mony a lang day; but it's a raal pleesure gettin' a toothfu' o' sic guid thing."

"Ay, it's *very* guid; but jist fling yer thumblefu' in yer mouth there," returned Mrs Curmuddie, as her friend had set down the glass with the smallest quantity in it that she could possibly leave, for the purpose of showing that she did not care about being so very greedy as take it all at the first offer. "Jist tak it oot nae," continued Mrs Curmuddie; "ye ken what I've tae dae when I gang tae your house."

Mrs Artichoke did so, and again pronounced it to be the strongest and best spirits ever submitted to her judgment; and Mrs Curmuddie, after helping herself to a glass of the same, and passing a number of remarks on its excellent invigorating qualities, allowed Mrs Artichoke to take her departure, when she resumed the household employments that the visit of her friend had interrupted.

CHAPTER VIII.

This day I braved him on behalf of Norval,
Perhaps too far.

Douglas Tragedy.

SOME courtships are got over remarkably quick, and reach their consummation without much trouble, either to the parties immediately concerned, or to others connected with them; and it happened in this case, that long before the recovery of the injury to Mr Skeldrin's hand had rendered the professional visits of Dr Golloch to Thistle Ha' unnecessary, Mrs Skeldrin had with great satisfaction detected that something more than anxiety on her husband's account had to do with bringing the doctor so regularly to the house. This, properly enough, she encouraged in every way, and was also pleased to the utmost to find that these visits were not at all disagreeable to her daughter, who, on the contrary, notwithstanding her father's positive commands that she should give Mr Gobbler every encouragement, had become a great deal more distant and saucy in her manner towards that gentleman, from almost the first time of her seeing Dr Golloch, than she had ever before ventured to show herself.

Mr Gobbler, though at no time very acute in the comprehension, proved himself unusually sharp, in this case, in detecting that he had not in reality made so much progress with the young lady as he had at one time fancied. Though he still continued to hold his former place in the good opinion of old Mr Skeldrin, and found that gentleman's anxiety that his daughter should become Mrs Gobbler nowise diminished, he felt

sensible that something was wrong, and directly fixed upon the doctor as being the cause of this difference, from what he had seen and heard of the doctor's receptions there, in the course of his own skulking about, or flying visits to Thistle Ha'. He hinted his thoughts on the subject to Mr Skeldrin; but his suspicions were not quite removed by that gentleman's assertions to the contrary, and the displeasure he evinced at such a thing ever being thought of, while he was master of his own house.

To do Mrs Skeldrin justice, it is but right to say, that while encouraging her daughter to listen to Dr Golloch, and give up Mr Gobbler, she had never entertained any great liking for the latter gentleman from the first time she had seen him, which was long before he had begun to go about her house in the capacity of a wooer.

This Mr Gobbler was a farmer, and one too who was considered to be well enough off in regard to money matters and the like; but although

" He had owsen, horse, and kye,
And sheep upo' the hill,
And mony ither things forby,
That would been at her will,"

and might have been a good enough match so far as these recommendations went; yet he was not, otherwise, a man that either Mrs Skeldrin or her daughter cared anything about, or looked upon with any degree of favour, though in Mr Skeldrin's eyes he was every thing suitable, almost to perfection.

When Mrs Skeldrin's consent had been asked by Mr Gobbler at the commencement of his suit, he was just told by her, that "he that could win her daughter could wear her;" and she neither promised him support, nor showed any opposition whatever in the matter. With her daughter, too, she went just about the same length with her advice, simply telling her to "*ride the ford as she found it;*" for Mrs Skeldrin, being aware

that Mr Gobbler was a pretty good match of his own kind, was quite willing to sacrifice her own scruples, if her daughter should wish, or circumstances eventually lead her to think of coming to terms. Indeed, as the case then stood, she did not exactly care for interfering, and thought it more prudent not to do so either way; but now that a man to her own liking, as well as that of her daughter, had come in the way, the case was entirely changed, and she at once advised Jeanie to pay all attention to the doctor, as being one likely to prove such a highly-desirable connection, and to leave Mr Gobbler to "whistle on his thumb," or do anything that might suit his fancy. Besides this, she also undertook to break the matter to her husband, in the hope of inducing him to modify, or otherwise alter, his opinion and wish on the subject.

Mr Skeldrin was very much displeased when his wife first touched upon this matter to him, and declared, in the words uppermost at the time, that no one would ever have his consent to getting his daughter in marriage, except Mr Gobbler; that, independent of the service the doctor had rendered, and the good it had done him, he would prohibit him, or any other such landlouser, from entering his door again, if such things as this were to be the result. Was the man—he indignantly asked—that he had looked out for a son-in-law, to be turned adrift, and treated in that way for the sake of a person they knew little or nothing about? and was everything that he himself proposed, or wished to be done, to be set aside, or knocked to pieces in that way, and his intentions contradicted and gone against without his consent, or ever even consulting him on the subject? No! certainly not! He would show every person connected with him, and belonging to his establishment, something amazingly contrary, and would learn wife, daughter, and all he had to do with, that his word was to be obeyed implicitly in everything; and he hoped that *Mrs Skeldrin* would never presume to let him hear

a word on that subject again. After expressing himself in these terms, which knocked up his share of the row, Mr Skeldrin, as was his custom when quarrelling with his better-half (which occasionally happened, though generally about matters of very little importance), immediately went off to the fields in a huff, to prevent his wife getting time to reply. But though this was his chief reason for sheering off, he looked, or tried to look, so fierce and determined, that any stranger would have supposed that he had made up his mind conclusively to hear nothing in extenuation of the enormous offence that had been perpetrated, in thus presuming to speak of such a thing in his presence, and far less, of the idea of an endeavour having been made to thwart his plans, and contradict him. He was now in a way satisfied, or rather, tried to believe in his own mind, that he had driven all the nonsense, as he termed it, out of his wife's head. But Mrs Skeldrin was quite aware that her husband's "bark was worse than his bite;" and having got the first blast of his fury over, which, by the way, did not give her very great uneasiness, she had little hesitation in resolving to bring the matter again before him. Besides, she felt somewhat assured, as she had done on many former occasions, that she would get the matter to go in the way she wished it, notwithstanding his partiality towards Mr Gobbler, and the fervour and spirit with which he seemed determined to support him.

She knew, or calculated, that he would expect her to speak on the same subject again, although he had been so bitter about it; and she was equally certain, that if she did not very soon speak herself, he would not be long in again taking up the matter, as he had heard so little of it.

Thinking it better, therefore, to let him take his own time, she did so; and it turned out that her expectations had been correct, as he ere long began to allude *to it again, in what he no doubt considered a quiet*

way, by supposing there would be nothing particular under what his wife had been saying to him regarding Dr Golloch. But Mrs Skeldrin showed him there were particulars, by entering into them all very fully, and commenced her process of winding him round her finger, by getting him persuaded that going against his wishes was the most distant idea of her mind, and what she was sorry he had so little confidence in her, as ever to suppose her capable of presuming to attempt. He heard and listened patiently to all she had to say; but, woe betide his obstinacy! His opinion was as adverse as ever, and he again declared his determination to have his own way, in spite of the golden visions his wife had held up to him of the future happiness of his daughter, if she should become the doctor's wife; and of the disappointment that would be felt by all the people of the neighbourhood, and the envy that would be shown by all those who had daughters the length of becoming wives, if their Jeanie should be so very fortunate as secure him; and how much grander it would be to have a daughter with the high-sounding title of Mrs Dr Golloch, compared with being the wife of a plain moorland farmer. All this, however true Mr Skeldrin might think it, he said, went no way to alter his resolutions; and that it would be well for Mrs Skeldrin, if she had put any nonsense of that kind into her daughter's head, that she got it put out again as quickly as possible. Mrs Skeldrin was not easily repulsed, and she, in turn, attentively listened to his story, apparently without allowing it to put her anything about; and when he finished or stopped to consider what next to say, she just quietly went on to picture to him, as impressively as she could, what a melancholy thing it would have been had *her* father interfered with *her* choice in the same way, and forced her to give up Mr Skeldrin, and take some one she did not like; and what the equally sad result would have been, had she been compelled to marry Mr Skeldrin, and he been one she had cared

nothing about! This was a view of the matter which had never before occurred to Mr Skeldrin's bright intellect; and he felt his resolution begin, and gradually continue, to give way, till he got the length of admitting that there was some little truth in what his wife had said; but though he still held out that he did not see sufficient reason why Mr Gobbler should not turn out as good a man as the doctor, he got by degrees so far round to her way of thinking, that she brought him the length of saying, that if they were determined not to do the proper way, they could do as they pleased, and abide by the consequences, as he would interfere no more, or longer endeavour to keep them right.

This was little else than what Mrs Skeldrin had looked for as the issue of her endeavours; for as her husband had almost no chance arguing with her, it was generally the case that she came off victor, in all the family skirmishes and disputes that occasionally disturbed the monotony of their otherwise quiet home.

The doctor was now, to a certain extent, left at full liberty to repeat his visits without any one interfering with him; and he might be said to have his way quite clear, if he wished to continue his attentions; for now, though not exactly

"Monarch of all he surveyed,"

still, in this instance,

"His right there was none to dispute,"

at least, with much chance of success. How could they expect it? Here was the young lady herself quite willing to be

"Woo'd and married and a';"

her mother anxious for the fulfilment of the same; the father now resolved on leaving them all to do as they pleased; and Mr Gobbler, the old suitor, turned off *with none of the three* interesting themselves much

about him. Happy Dr Golloch! was man ever so fortunate?

Not only in this alone, but in his professional capacity too, he was equally lucky and successful, and got so much employment in all directions, as to threaten the entire desertion of Dr Plyphleme by even some of the oldest and most stanch of his friends, who for the first time began to see and consider that it was far better to allow the precious contents of their veins to follow their own natural courses, than to have themselves hacked with lancets, or drained by leeches, for every toothache, extra-smarting corn, or whisky-burning stomach, that might trouble them.

The kind and indefatigable exertions of Mr Tawse on the doctor's behalf, and the anxiety and zeal he displayed in aiding him, by spreading reports of his success and skill in every direction, tended also materially to increase the extent of the doctor's connexions. The doctor, nevertheless, was not quite so short-sighted as Mr Tawse allowed himself to believe, but soon detected both that there was some strong selfish motive under the assiduous attentions of Mr Tawse, and the direction also in which the motive lay; but to check the extraordinary officiousness of Mr Tawse was no part of the doctor's business, so long as it should do no harm; and even taking the probability of Mr Tawse, on the non-fulfilment of his wishes, perhaps finding reason to regret his exertions, no one but himself would be to blame for any trouble or inconvenience he might have voluntarily taken.

CHAPTER IX.

Take tent, when on a sojourn bent,
Within the car of Bacchus,
And keep in view, if caution's void,
What mighty fools 'twill make us,
When driving heedlessly along,
Unmindful of our fate,
If we should rashly pass the check
At Reason's turnpike gate.

By way of returning the kindness of those of his new friends who had more particularly interested themselves in his behalf, the doctor resolved on inviting Messrs Tawse, Skeldrin, Butterscales, Chizzle, and a few others, to dine with him,—this being, in his opinion, the best course he could take with a view to showing them that he appreciated their good feelings, and the value of their friendship, where it did exist; but, in Mr Tawse's case, he despised the selfishness that had led to such excessive eagerness to serve him, although, as has been said, he was not at all insensible of the good this gentleman had contrived to do for him one way and another.

The invitations referred to were, as usual, all accepted; for anything in that way was at all times particularly agreeable to the whole of the gentlemen named; and the doctor could have chosen no better course temporarily to secure their volatile favour than through the channel of their ever-ready stomachs.

The day arrived, and with it the dinner guests, all in their best "dickies," and the latest possible razor-tracks *apparent on every face*, as they had all made a point of

the most gorgeous array they could command being turned out for the occasion.

The doctor, knowing that country and moorland stomachs are, like taxmen, always on the crave, had the dinner prepared to a second of the notified time, and ready for the attack; so they all sat down very quickly, and got through it without much delay. Nothing unusual, at least worth alluding to, taking place at this silent, hurried, and almost speech-unbroken campaign among the dishes, we shall pass over the short interval of dinner, merely remarking, that Mr Butterscales dropped his snuff-box in the soup-tureen after the first service. But the box, a new or little-used German-silver one he kept for Sunday, was fished out by its owner, after a few unsuccessful drags of the spoon, and wiped on the table-cover, when it was found, from its having a close-shutting lid, that the valuable contents had fortunately sustained no damage.

Dismissing the dinner, then, we shall pass on to the time the dishes were removed, and in their stead, the glasses, hot water, and other materials, more welcome to some of the worthies, placed on the table. This, too, was done as expeditiously as possible; and when the company had got what some of them termed "charged," the doctor, seeing they were anxious to begin, rose to his feet for the purpose of opening the proceedings, and said,—

"I feel exceedingly happy, my friends, at having the honour of your company here to-night; and I beg, though it's not at all in favour of my profession, to drink to all your very good healths; and I have to request you to help yourselves to punch, or whatever you prefer, and to make yourselves as comfortable in every way as you possibly can, which it will give me the greatest pleasure to see you doing."

The company received this with great demonstrations of approval. Mr Chizzle winked to Mr Tawse, and shook his head, which plainly indicated that he "did

not hear the like of that very often;" Mr Tawse rapped on the table very long and very loudly; Mr Butterscales cheered tremendously, clapped his hands, and upset his tumbler in his enthusiasm. Indeed, it was evident that the whole present, if they had had any doubts on the point previously, were now quite prepared to admit that the doctor was, in a great many respects, a very clever man, independent altogether of his professional skill.

Mr Tawse, being the principal man, was quite prepared and willing to render an acknowledgment of the doctor's courtesy, and he knew that none of the others would venture to do it while he was there; but then, as he expected a little solicitation at their hands, to appear more consequential, he did not offer to rise. Soon, however, as he hinted that it should be done, sundry elaborate winks and signs and depressions of the brow followed among his friends, and he rose, and leaning on the table, said,—

"We're all particularly happy to have the pleasure of being here this night, sir; and I am sure every one here wishes you every success in your profession, doctor; though, at the same time, I daresay we are all selfish enough to hope we may never have occasion to consult you." He stopped when he had said this, laughed very loud, and looked round the table for approval, emptied his glass, and sat down moderately satisfied with the reception his joke had met, though he did not observe that Mr Chizzle had to nudge Mr Butterscales before his laugh got fully out.

The doctor bowed, and the company tapped on the table, to satisfy Mr Tawse that what he had so ably delivered was appreciated by them.

Mr Tawse, by sundry winks and pantomimic gestures, then impressed upon Mr Chizzle the necessity and propriety of his advancing something, he being the *second* person of importance at the table. To do this, *though he had a speech prepared*, Mr Chizzle was a

little reluctant; but after rocking uneasily in his chair a short time, he got on his feet, and said,—

“Well, sirs, well, sirs, I would say a few words. This gentleman, as you all will agree with me, is a tremendous excellent soul. I wish him well; yes, hang it! I say again, I wish him well! But for all that, in other words, I hope, as Mr Tawse has said, that we keep all alive and kicking, like a gingerbread horse.”

The speech of this eloquent gentleman met with as much applause as those which preceded it;—the happy allusion to the horse having a very considerable effect on the risibility of some of the audience, who all again solemnly drank to their own healths.

The speech-makers here took breath a little; but, through the ingenuity of Mr Tawse, silence was not allowed to gain complete ascendancy.

“That’s a prime toddy-whisky, doctor,” he remarked, with a view to starting a conversation; and so saying, he slowly tasted again. Several of the gentlemen, on hearing this, tasted also, and, looking through their glasses, pronounced it to be “a well-bodied spirit.” It having been supplied by Mr Butterscales, he saved the doctor the trouble of replying, by immediately grinning very knowingly, and saying he knew it again.

The lively conversation came to a dead stand with this remark, and the company sat staring at their glasses in silence, till the mirthful Mr Tawse, looking particularly lively and jocular, with much dignity laughingly remarked, as he took another glass, that they were “long in getting the steam up.”

“It would help us a little, if some of you who are singers would favour us with a song,” suggested the doctor.

The gentlemen looked at each other, and Mr Tawse said he was no singer himself, but that his friend Mr Butterscales, who had a decided turn for music, would perhaps oblige them with a few of his favourite verses.

Mr Butterscales coughed very loudly, and said he

was never in a worse condition for singing; but referred them to his friend Mr Chizzle, who, he said, was "always willing and ready."

"Good singers," the doctor remarked, "generally do best when they are what they term 'out of order,' and that may perhaps be the case with Mr Butterscales."

Mr Tawse rapped on the table at this, and Mr Butterscales drank another glass, and hinted doubts about being able to go through any of his songs properly, but evinced a willingness to endeavour to please them.

"Come awa then, come awa, Mr Butterscales," said Mr Chizzle. "Your favourite song, Simon—your favourite song."

Mr Butterscales drew himself up with an air of great importance, and began to drawl as follows:—

Jim Gawvin was a sailor,
 John Gawvin was a tailor,
 Will Gawvin was a jailer,—
 Sing ho! ha! hee!
 Jess Gawvin she sold basses,
 Jean Gawvin she sold cresses,
 Ann Gawvin she made dresses
 To answer all the three.
 Their father was a ploughman,
 His father was a showman,
 And his one was a cowman
 That herded on the lea.
 And many of all stations
 Were spread out through the nations,
 In these three generations
 Of this ancient familie,—
 Of this ancient familie,
 That herded on the lea,
 To answer all the three,—
 Sing ho! ha! hee!
 Then a health to Jim Gawvin,
 A health to John Gawvin,
 A health to Will Gawvin,
 A health to Jess Gawvin,
 A health to Jean Gawvin,
 A health to Ann Gawvin,
 A health to all the three,
 Of the ancient familie,
 That herded on the lea,—
 Sing ho! ha! hee!

The party continued to chorus, or sing the "health" lines with loud and rapturous shouts, accompanied by the doctor as he best could; while Mr Chizzle, with tears in his eyes, induced by his excessive delight and loud shouting, declared he had never heard anything so fine in his life, or his friend go through it more beautifully and correctly.

Whether the doctor was much edified, or could fully appreciate the interesting particulars of the "ancient familie" alluded to in the song, we will not say; but he expressed himself to be highly pleased with it, at any rate.

"I think," said Mr Butterscales, after the chorus and remarks subsided, "that as I have done my best, some of the rest of you should let us hear another song." He looked towards the doctor as he spoke; and Mr Tawse observing this, immediately detailed his great and longing wish to hear a song which he said he had heard the doctor sing on a former occasion, and which he hoped he would favour them with again.

Mr Chizzle, being bound to consider whatever Mr Tawse said as highly effective, bawled out that this was capital; while Mr Butterscales shouted at the top of his voice, that it was the richest proposition he ever had heard from Mr Tawse; and Mr Skeldrin pronounced it to be excellent; when all smashed on the table, to strengthen and give weight to their respective remarks.

The doctor said it would give him the greatest pleasure to agree to the request of his friends in the way he best could, and thereupon began the solicited song:—

In old Londonderry, lived Paddy Cullooney,
Who rode the best donkey in Donnybrook Fair;
He cracked all the boys' heads with his shillelah,
And broke all the hearts of the Colleens down there.

There was no one went there, from Cape Clear to Athlone,
But Paddy Cullooney was match for them all;
He could smash all the glasses down at the shubbeen house,
And throw the old apple-wife over her stall.

When well fired with whisky, or filled with potteen,
 He would face any devil in all the Green Isle;
 But though then he fierce was as tiger or lion,
 Young Katie M'Phee could still cause him to smile!

But death he did summon this bold noble boy;
 And oh! what a screaming was heard all around,
 When, in spite of the tears of poor Katie M'Phee,
 He was put in cold lodgings far under the ground!

It was sad for to think, he who'd been at so many,
 Could not see the uproar made at his own wake;
 But though he is gone, and there's no use lamenting,
 We can still o'er again take a glass for his sake.

Then here's to the bold noble Paddy Cullooney,
 The open, the tender, the kind, and the free!
 He is gone from beside us, and it may be never
 His equal among us again we shall see!

When the noisy and outrageous applause with which the above was received had somewhat died away, and the company, as suggested in the song, had taken a glass, for the sake of the celebrated gentleman alluded to in it, the doctor, as he saw the singing pleased his guests, suggested that, as Mr Chizzle's musical talents had been hinted at, it would afford him, and, he had no doubt, the rest of the company also, great gratification if he, Mr Chizzle, would obligingly favour them.

Mr Chizzle demurred a little at first; but the peremptory request of Mr Tawse, supported by Mr Butterscales in his most captivating and familiar style, quite overcame him; so, after taking a glass, for the purpose, as he said, of "oiling the pavement of his weasen," he commenced to howl—

A seat by the fire, with a pint of good beer,
 And a pipe of tobacco, is excellent cheer;
 But a friend to partake with's the pride of my heart,
 So we'll empty the full-flowing bowl ere we part!

For it's pleasant to sit and enjoy our glass,
 And leave all the cares o' the world to pass:
 Then here's to the bottle, and let it go round,
 So that pleasure and friendship among us abound!

When our sweethearts are false, and our spirits get low,
A glass of good grog makes them cheerfully flow:
Then here's to the bottle, and let it go round,
So that pleasure and friendship among us abound!

Then let each one that wishes kind friendship to reign,
Quaff freely his tumbler, and fill it again:
So here's to the bottle, and let it go round,
That friendship and pleasure among us abound!

If the two former songs had "taken," as it is termed, it was clear, so far as the noise made on their conclusions stood compared with the yelling and kicking set up as the last lines of this one faded away, that they were considered as left very far behind, the chorus to the history of the "Gawvins" not even excepted. This did not arise so much either out of partiality to the singer (though he was second man in the company), or appreciation of his performance, but simply because the subject of the song was more peculiarly agreeable to, and agreeing with, the tastes of the company, although, it is true, the other songs ended much to the same purpose as this one. But they liked this one, and willingly followed the dictates of the last verse, by emptying their tumblers, and proceeding to fill them again, each after his own most approved principle.

Mr Butterscales, while charging his glass, with the song running in his mind, good-humouredly inquired of the doctor, whether he had ever been subjected to the trials which are said to follow courtship, when the sweetheart has turned out false, as, he alleged, were alluded to in the song.

"I am not quite sure what you refer to," replied the doctor; "but I do not think that the song entered into any particulars on that subject—at any rate, not that I perceived."

"I beg your pardon, though," returned Mr Butterscales, looking somewhat displeased at being contradicted, yet at the same time exulting a little at his more *extensive knowledge* on the point: "but I think

it *does* speak of that. However," he continued, raising his voice, "we'll refer to Mr Chizzle, who'll be able to tell. Mr Chizzle," said he, looking towards that gentleman, "there's something about courtship in that sang o' yours, isn't there?"

"Let me see," said Mr Chizzle; "I'm no a'thegither sure; but stop till I think."

Mr Chizzle began to think; and from the motion of his lips, it was evident that his thinking consisted in repeating over to himself the whole song from the commencement.

While all eyes were turned on Mr Chizzle, anxiously awaiting the result of his consideration, Mr Buttercales adroitly managed to satisfy his cravings for snuff, unobserved by Mr Tawse, that being a luxury Mr Tawse neither made use of himself, nor allowed his friends to partake of in his presence, when he could prevent their indulging.

"O yes," at length Mr Chizzle got out; "this is maybe what ye mean, Mr Butterscales:—

'When our sweethearts are false, and our spirits get low,
A glass of good grog makes them cheerfully flow:
Then here's to the bottle, and'—"

"Ay, that's it, man, that's it," said Mr Butterscales, looking towards the doctor with an air of triumph; "that's the thing, doctor. D'ye no ca' that what I was sayin'? Who knows best now?"

"Oh! I daresay it is," returned the doctor, smiling; "but I'm glad to say, I am never troubled much that way; for the ladies are all too fond of me to beat retreat, and leave me in the fog!"

"Are ye no gaun to look oot a wife among our young leddies here yet, doctor?" inquired Mr Chizzle. "This bacheeler wark winna dae here, mind. Na, na! we maun hae ye married, lad."

"Ay, there's a splendit assortment of the real ware *here*," rejoined Mr Butterscales; "stout, splendit women—*no the like o' them in the hale world, doctor.*"

"O, perhaps I may," returned the doctor; "and I am quite aware you have a number of very fine young ladies here; but I cannot exactly say that I have seen quite so many yet, as to enable me to consider the remark of Mr Butterscales as fully borne out; though, at the same time, I would be quite prepared to allow that he is not very far wrong either."

"What do you say about 'fully borne out,' sir?" inquired Mr Tawse, in a very angry tone; and stretching himself halfway over the table, he looked remarkably fierce, as he added, "I think you are rather too free in expressing your opinion, sir."

Mr Tawse had just been thinking something about his own very superior daughters as Mr Butterscales was speaking, and this had made him consider, what he supposed to be, the doctor's non-concurrence with Mr Butterscales' remark, as having special reference to them; and the "bodied spirit" he had been imbibing during the evening had prompted him to retaliate.

"I'll take the liberty to use such expressions as I think proper, sir," returned the doctor; "and I do not see that I am in this instance called upon to retract what I have said, nor is there any reason why I should submit my words for your approval."

"You had as well keep a watch on your words, at any rate, sir," returned Mr Tawse, warmly. "Remember what you are speaking about, and whom you are speaking to."

"It would really be well if you would be a little more respectful in *your* speech, sir," returned the doctor. "There is nothing that I have said which could possibly give you any cause to speak in such terms, at least that I am aware of."

"You're a confounded insolent whelp!" said Mr Tawse, rising in a fury, and throwing a glass and its contents in the doctor's face. "I'll sit no longer in your house."

"I'll give you a taste of the whelp's teeth," cried the

doctor, getting irritated at this insult; and springing up, he clutched Mr Tawse's throat, and, with a sudden jerk, tumbled him over a chair with a loud crash.

"Mercy! murder! murder!" roared Mr Tawse, struggling to free himself from the firm grasp the doctor had taken of him, and under which, although the doctor was not hurting him, he supposed his life was being rapidly extinguished.

Mr Butterscales started up for the purpose of trying to separate the furious couple; but in his hurry, he missed footing, and fell right across the sprawling pair; and his weight being none of the lightest, both the doctor and Mr Tawse yelled out on receiving the shock. Mr Butterscales being little the worse of the tumble, got upon his knees without much difficulty, and began to tug at the doctor rather roughly; and Mr Chizzle giving his assistance, he was glad to relinquish his hold, when they succeeded in getting Mr Tawse placed on his legs, safely rescued from his perilous position.

After this scuffle, Mr Butterscales and his friends immediately began endeavours to make up matters; but Mr Tawse would listen to nothing, and after arguing and squabbling for a short time, went off in a rage. The rest of the guests felt so uneasy and depressed, after the harmony of the meeting had received such a disagreeable shock, that they all very soon likewise took their leave.

Mr Tawse, naturally an ill-tempered, haughty man, felt his pride exceedingly mortified, and his self-esteem greatly wounded at having been subjected to such severe treatment, especially in the presence of so many of his friends, who, he could not help thinking, would make the most of having seen him so roughly handled, and he likewise dreaded their estimation of him being lowered some degrees in consequence. Undoubtedly, in Mr Tawse's opinion, the greatest real evil consequent *on this affray* was the closing the gates of hope against *the probability* of any of his daughters getting hold of

the doctor; but perhaps not the least aggravating of the anticipated consequences was, that since the doctor had unquestionably mastered him, others, who had hitherto stood in much awe of him, might be led to suppose they could do the same. This, Mr Tawse knew, was far from an impossibility; and he fancied that if some of those who stood in dread of him, were led to see or suppose he was not in reality such a formidable person as to warrant his being allowed to dictate and rule almost unopposed, his sway over them would thereby be materially affected. The fear of incurring the displeasure of this mighty man had hitherto permitted his ruling spirit to reign, uncurbed by those he lorded over; so it is easy to suppose that any idea of encroachments being made on the ruling system in which he gloried, would be viewed with anything but satisfaction.

He had gone to the doctor's that night, in the belief that he was one of that gentleman's best and warmest friends; but he left in the full fury of his bitterest enemy, and with the determination to do him all the ill in his power, and remove, if possible, every vestige of good he had previously done him; and to his commencement in his new endeavours we may shortly have occasion to refer.

CHAPTER X.

Sae quiet, sae soft, sae canny lookin',
Ye think he'll catch wi' little poukin'!
But though he whyles is fond o' funnin',
He keeps his distance unco cunnin'!

MR TAWSE and Mr Skeldrin had long been on terms of tumbler friendship with each other; and notwithstanding the dispute, already referred to, which took place between them at the "Cheerie Farmers," and led to the latter gentleman's being confined for some weeks, they still maintained the same relation towards each other they had all along done, and met at the doctor's dinner-party without any disagreeable feelings on either side, so far as that occurrence had to do with.

As this may appear a little singular, it may perhaps not be unnecessary to explain that, on the day following the meeting at the "Cheerie Farmers," neither of the two retained a very distinct recollection of the quarrel, or any other thing that had happened on the occasion. But on Mr Tawse's hearing afterwards that his friend Mr Skeldrin had met with some misfortune after the meeting, a kind of dreamy remembrance of something or other about the squabble formed in his mind, and he eventually recollected so much, that as soon as he heard of Mr Skeldrin's getting well, he set off to Thistle Ha', to see how things stood, with a view to getting matters set right, if anything disagreeable should be found to exist in Mr Skeldrin's feelings towards him on account of what had taken place. This was not the first occasion on which he and Mr Skeldrin had quarrelled over *their toddy* about grammatical mistakes and different

trifles; but, so far as apparent, none of their disputes had ever attained the growth of lasting effects on either side; for they had always agreed again, without much trouble, in something of the same way as they had differed. Indeed, from their practice in this respect, they might with all justice have been pronounced to be believers in the great powers efficaciously possessed by the "barley-bree," as a restorer of broken friendship, and that

"When neebors anger at a plea,
And get as wud, as wud can be,
* * * * *
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee,
To taste the barrel;"

for all the former disputes had been settled, if not on this principle, at least in this way; and this one was also satisfactorily adjusted with the help of the whisky.

Mr Skeldrin, in fact, had recollected very little of the whole affair, except the tumble; but he could hardly call to mind the reason why he had been at the place where he knew he got himself hurt; and all that Mr Gobbler had been able to say or recollect was, that he had seen Mr Skeldrin go after the schoolmaster, and that he had gone too, because Mr Skeldrin went. But all he knew of the cause of the quarrel was, that it had been "through speakin'"; so that did not enlighten Mr Skeldrin very much.

When it came to be talked over with Mr Tawse, that gentleman just remembered what suited himself, forgetting all that did not tend towards his vindication, he being too glad to have matters again rectified without the trouble of entering very minutely into any reasons at all.

The easy and amicable way that this was smoothed up, was even more satisfactory than Mr Tawse had anticipated; but he had resolved, and was prepared, in case it had turned out otherwise, to make any amount of apologies that might be required by Mr Skeldrin;—*for, would he, for the sake of a few of the apologies he*

so often made, allow himself to be deprived of the many opportunities of getting a good, comfortable tumbler of toddy, which was next to certain to fall to his lot every time he could make an errand to Thistle Ha', or find anything like a reasonable excuse for calling?—not to say that he stood upon any very great ceremony either with his visits, but he generally had the knack of getting something pretty plausible to take him there. Carrying over a newspaper, with some new discovery in spades or harrows noticed in it; showing Mr Skeldrin some rare kind of potato; or checking, for a tenth or twentieth time, the measurement of some part or other of his farm; suited Mr Tawse's purpose admirably, and very often were put into requisition. But the most useful of these devices was some new method of trapping moles, on mathematical principles, which Mr Tawse had invented, and which, notwithstanding that Mr Skeldrin could never clearly demonstrate the plan, or see it to be practically of much service in destroying those animals, Mr Tawse took the greatest pains to try to teach thoroughly, and frequently would hang about with Mr Skeldrin a whole afternoon for that purpose. But this theory of Mr Tawse he was bound to consider highly ingenious, or to say so at least; and though it gave him many a stand among the mole-hills to little purpose, he had just to put up with it. Indeed, whatever it was that took him over—whether potatoes, spades, harrows, land-surveying, or mole-catching—it generally answered its end, and Mr Tawse usually got as many tumblers as his calculation led him to expect.

The intimacy he knew to be existing between the doctor and the people of Thistle Ha', no doubt made him envious to a great degree; but it did not cause him to consider the keeping up of his friendship with Mr Skeldrin as a thing of less importance on that *account*; for, in fact, he was more anxious now to keep *on friendly terms* with Mr Skeldrin than he had ever

been. This arose from the hope, that as Mr Gobbler had been superseded at Thistle Ha', and left a free man to look for a wife where he liked, he might be able, with the help of Mr Skeldrin, to secure him as a husband for Miss Tawse, now that the doctor was out of her reach, and no better match likely to offer.

His quarrel with Dr Golloch, however, took quite a different turn from any he had ever had with Mr Skeldrin; and Mr Tawse could not bring himself to attempt reconciliation in any way, as he knew the doctor to be quite a different man from those he usually quarrelled with, and not so likely to be affected by a copious expenditure of apologies as they were; but more particularly, as the expectations of securing the doctor which he had entertained were all removed, without a chance of their being renewed, even although an agreement should be brought about, it made the endeavour less worth the while.

He and the doctor now passed and re-passed each other without signs of recognition. The visits which, before this, had been so frequently interchanged, were now at an end. Mr Tawse grew every day more bitter in his animosity towards the doctor; and if he had been loud in his praise before the dispute had occurred, he was now louder in speaking ill of him, whenever an opportunity of doing so occurred.

The Misses Tawse, too, notwithstanding their former partiality for the doctor, and the endeavours they had made to trap him by all the arts in their power, finding these to be of no avail, also began, as instructed by their amiable parent, to throw out as much spite against him as they could; and made the greatest exertions they were capable of to get his now, in their opinion, bad name into as wide circulation as possible, by stirring up scandal in all directions, and striving to increase his enemies, and cause him as much annoyance as they were able to create.

The relation in which the doctor stood to the family

at Thistle Ha' grieved them not a little, it being particularly aggravating to them to see what they termed a "heather beauty" preferred to their own finely-polished fabrics; but as their beloved papa had discovered the real character of this man, they pretended to console themselves with the affected belief that they had made a most fortunate escape; and thinking that this might furnish a plea for bringing the new light in which they now saw the doctor, under the notice of Miss Skeldrin, they resolved on trying whether they might not be able to enlighten her on the subject, and get a bad feeling towards him engrafted into Thistle Ha'.

Being in the habit of visiting at Thistle Ha' occasionally, and Miss Skeldrin at times paying them a visit in return, although a very regular interchange of this practice was not kept up, there was no obstacle in the way of their calling on Miss Skeldrin as often as they might find opportunity, or wish to do so. To lose no time in getting this feeling of pity brought to bear on Miss Skeldrin, they laid their plans as to the best and most efficacious means of getting the fortunate and lucky discovery they had made through their father communicated to her, as a friendly warning. Agreeing on this point, they accordingly set off to Thistle Ha' on their pious errand, and without difficulty soon managed to bring the doctor's name into the conversation between them and Miss Skeldrin. By degrees they succeeded, as they thought, in showing and impressing upon her the insignificance in which the doctor appeared in their eyes, and the little they could ever think of a person such as they tried to make her believe they had found the doctor to be. They concluded their harangue, by repeating over long catalogues of miseries and trials that they were prepared cheerfully to encounter, rather than to be *so unfortunate* as to have anything to do with a man of *his kind*.

As Miss Skeldrin listened to all this with great attention, they became somewhat convinced of the success of their endeavours, and felt a little satisfaction in thinking that she was becoming fully sensible of the truth and force of all they had said against the doctor. But, alas! how far astray were all their suppositions and conclusions! for Miss Skeldrin was not only quite aware of what had taken place between the doctor and Mr Tawse, and knew that the dislike of the Misses was more affected than real, or attributable in a great measure to this cause; but she also knew that spite, induced by personal disappointment, had a good deal to do with it. This she knew from having heard, as has been already hinted, that one of these young ladies had, under her father's directions, evinced a particularly strong inclination to force herself into the notice of the gentleman in question, almost from the first moment of his arrival in Bramble-Green. It had even been reported, too, that one or other of them had gone so far as to commit her sentiments regarding the doctor to paper, and intrust the same to the care of the Post-Office, little dreaming that Miss M'Keeker, the old maid who acted as post-mistress, with her usual attention to all letters in ladies' writing addressed to gentlemen, and *vice versa*, had taken pains to examine this important document very carefully before allowing it to reach its destination. The result of her researches had afterwards been communicated in confidence to Mrs Curmuddie, who, as usual, although promising the utmost secrecy, took the earliest opportunity of doing the same to Mrs Artichoke and others, till it went the round of the village, and reached the ears of Miss Skeldrin, by a circuit it would have been somewhat troublesome to trace.

Knowing all this, it was not difficult for Miss Skeldrin to perceive and set down the charges they directly and indirectly insinuated or laid against the doctor, as proceeding from, and being in every sense the outpourings

of, the essence of ill-feelings towards herself and him. But of their disinterested efforts, the principal, and almost only, effects were putting them in the position they would have wished the doctor to occupy in the estimation of Miss Skeldrin; and giving her both a far greater idea of the doctor's importance, and a higher appreciation of her own good fortune in having been preferred to them!

In the face of all the hints thrown out by Miss Skeldrin, which fell little short of plainly telling them that their departure was greatly desired, they contrived to spin out their visit, and stay to tea, as was their custom whenever they could find themselves in the way of such an opportunity.

Good fortune unexpectedly favoured them on this occasion, and a great deal better luck than they had either calculated on, or even fancied as probable, fell to their lot. It happened that Mr Gobbler, who still continued to prowl about Thistle Ha', dropped in with Mr Skeldrin, now the only member of that household who paid him any kind of attention, or gave him the least encouragement to repeat his visits.

The lovely Misses Tawse were quite overjoyed at the unlooked-for arrival of this mountain cupid, about whom they had heard so much and knew so little, and a very warm introduction on their part welcomed him to their acquaintanceship. By Mr Gobbler, however, it was not quite so much appreciated, as he showed himself, from the first moment of his entrance, to be particularly ill at ease. He took very little notice of the introduction, but sat down on the farthest-off chair he could get, casting side glances at the door, as if about to bolt away, or running his eyes over the whole ceiling, and up and down the walls, as he drawled out his unwilling and hesitating responses to the first remarks made to him after his entrance.

By-and-by, Mr Skeldrin, after some pressing, got him persuaded to sit nearer him and speak some, though

he maintained pretty obstinately that he was "fine where he first sat down." When, at length, he found out that the "leddies wi' the braw gowns" were not so stiff or formal as he had thought, he gathered some confidence, and extended his talk a little beyond a "yes" or a "no" when he was spoken to.

The Misses Tawse, on the whole, passed an hour or so, to all appearance, very happily in the company of Mr Gobbler, and seemed not to mind his quiet, awkward manner in the slightest,—neither his sitting in a state of uneasiness, as if in terror of his life, nor his twistings and contortions, serving to attract depreciating notice. His legs and hands never remained at rest,—the former being raised one over the other, let down again, and stretched out a hundred times; while his hand kept up an unceasing journey between his pockets and his head, which he perseveringly scratched with a weary, dissatisfied look. But the young ladies were thinking over and anticipating the pleasure they would derive from having his company or escort on their journey home, which they considered they had every reason to expect, and this kept them from viewing his actions in the same light as they might otherwise have done.

In this they were not disappointed, as, on the jocular suggestion of Mrs Skeldrin, Mr Gobbler was appointed to the honourable duty of seeing them home, which he, after much hesitation, consented to undertake. With anything apparent in his face but good will, he wrapped his head and shoulders in his plaid with very great care, and took the road with them, greatly to the relief of Mrs Skeldrin and Jeanie, who were heartily glad to get quit of the whole three.

What a delightful walk the Misses Tawse had with the accomplished gallant! He pocketed his hands, and sullenly accompanied them in close silence, walking at a very rapid rate till he considered he had gone far enough, when he broke silence, and told them he saw *nothing to hinder their finding the rest of the way*

themselves without him. But on stating his intention to

“Take the way that pleased himself,”

his proposition was strongly disapproved of, and by capitulation they succeeded in prevailing on him to accompany them farther, on the condition that he was to be allowed to turn at a point where the road near their own house broke off. This was in due time reached, and farther than it he refused to stir. They did all in their power to get him the whole way; but notwithstanding their utmost entreaties to go to the house, he would not venture, as he alleged, “for fear of the old man,” as he was still in the belief Mr Tawse would owe him a grudge for having assisted Mr Skeldrin to chase him on the night of the meeting at the “Cheerie Farmers.” They had, therefore, just to let him depart, and feel thankful for the moorland good-night he growled out, and that they had got his company so far.

CHAPTER XL.

"Farewell a while! I will not leave you long."
Home.

TIME went on, and Dr Golloch continued to prosper in his profession and succeed in his courtship, despite the endeavours and exertions made by Mr Tawse and his daughters to harm him, either in his public calling or privately, nearly all the efforts they took the trouble to make falling very far short of their design.

These indications of enmity, on the part of Mr Tawse and his family, produced some rather unlooked-for effects in the parish, and, in fact, served to do the doctor more good than otherwise, except perhaps among the very small number of thorough "Tawsonians," as the few friends of Mr Tawse were sometimes humorously designated,—that gentleman himself having a great many more enemies than friends among the community, as he, by his meddling, interfering manner, had disgusted almost every one, excepting those that had either seen nothing of him at all, by keeping quite aloof from him, or so little, that they had not had time to gain a thorough appreciation of his worth and character.

Those who viewed Mr Tawse quite indifferently, and looked upon him as neither a friend nor an enemy, did not trouble themselves very much about his quarrel with the doctor; but those who entertained a thorough dislike for Mr Tawse, when this ill-feeling of his towards the doctor came under their notice, had their attention attracted to the latter gentleman; and though some of them knew little or nothing of him, yet they took a

pleasure in doing all they could to encourage him in his profession, knowing that anything in favour of an enemy of Mr Tawse would go no short way towards his aggravation. They knew he hated to see any man he disliked taken notice of, or anything done whereby the disliked one would be benefited or served in the smallest degree; so they felt somewhat delighted at having this excellent opportunity of displeasing Mr Tawse in such a harmless and easy way. It is, however, with the love-making or courting that we have to deal in the meantime, if courting it can be called, when all the preliminaries may be considered to have been already long ago adjusted; yet it is nevertheless necessary that we follow their path, and keep up with their proceedings in this respect.

Although that unfortunate man, Mr Gobbler, might have seen it to be of little avail, he still persevered in keeping up acquaintance with Mr Skeldrin, and continued to hang about Thistle Ha', notwithstanding that he knew his presence would much rather have been dispensed with by her whom he had unsuccessfully taken so much trouble to force his friendship upon. This gentleman, it is true, could hardly be considered as an obstacle in the doctor's way; and his visiting Thistle Ha' caused the doctor little concern, and not much inconvenience, as he had, after seeing Mr Gobbler, long ago ceased to be jealous of him in the least. But it was still a little disagreeable to meet, as they sometimes happened to do, at Thistle Ha', as the doctor quite well knew that Mr Gobbler entertained a very unfriendly feeling towards him, which had been nothing lessened through his having got acquainted with Mr Tawse. Though meetings of the kind were awkward, yet as it was Mr Skeldrin's wish and delight to keep on terms of intimacy and friendship with Mr Gobbler, the doctor had no direct cause to interfere in the matter, or object to Mr Skeldrin's continuing friendly with him.

Jeanie, though not having the complete approbation

of her father, yet his non-interference being about equivalent, at least all they required or could, under the circumstances, reasonably look for at his hand, she had just to rest contented with Mr Gobbler's presence now and then, and endeavour to keep herself free from uneasiness on that account. But now, though it had been that her father had still wished her to listen to Mr Gobbler, his desire would not have been to much purpose, as she had got so very deep-rooted in her attachment to the doctor, that she was prepared and would have been quite happy to abide by him,

"Though father and mother and a' should gae mad."

Not that it could by any means be said that she went too far with her regard and love; but she entertained a great affection for the doctor, and he, to all appearance, showed the same or more for her.

The visits of the doctor to Thistle Ha', and those of Miss Skeldrin to the doctor's, increased day by day, and were so frequently repeated as to make it evident that the expected crisis was fast approaching. The doctor and she being seen walking about so often, afforded an excellent theme for Mrs Curmuddie and the other news-vending ladies, and presented such a number of different features, as served to keep their tongues going almost continually. Marriages and their antecedents were always much in request as subjects of comment; and this walking about, so openly practised by the doctor and Miss Skeldrin, or, as Mrs Curmuddie termed it, "gallantin' her beyond measure," was considered by the said lady to be a very gross breach of decorum. Neither she nor Mrs Artichoke could at all understand how it was possible that the doctor and Miss Skeldrin had been able to muster audacity and barefacedness to go through the village arm-in-arm in broad daylight, even although they *were* engaged. This, in their opinion, indecorous proceeding was of so serious a kind, that neither Mrs Curmuddie nor Mrs Artichoke could

get over the enormity of it, never having themselves in their younger days, before they were married, been capable of summoning courage to appear openly in such a trying position. But what were people going to turn to? According to Mrs Curmuddie, they were getting more depraved and shameless every day.

Mrs Artichoke, in particular, could not possibly get at the bottom of the impropriety that appeared to her to have induced Mrs Skeldrin to allow her daughter such liberty; and Mrs Curmuddie openly declared, that even although the situation her daughter held at the doctor's was a good one, and he a very kind master, she would never think of allowing her to remain there, were it not for the sake of letting her be beside Willie Artichoke, but would remove her at once from a place where she was likely to see so much on-going, that, in her mother's opinion, the highest morals stood in the greatest danger of being contaminated. Of course, what Mrs Curmuddie had in view regarding her daughter and Mrs Artichoke's son, can easily be inferred, without any further comment in the meantime; so, merely wishing them success and happiness in all respects, we shall leave them for the present.

The supposition that the much-talked-of marriage of the doctor was near at hand, based on this often-alluded-to visiting and exchanging of compliments, having attained about its climax, the prospect caused a very considerable increase of commotion in the gossiping market, and quite kindled anew the envy of half the mammas in the parish, many of whom felt quite grieved afresh at the prospect of the loss they fancied they would sustain on the consummation of this expected event.

Some of the old wives, who supposed themselves pretty sagacious and discerning, and several of that spiteful class of them, who had either no daughters to *provide matches for*, or none young enough for matches, *pretended not to look on the matter exactly in this light*,

and that they considered the doctor kind, for reasons they best knew themselves, if they had any, to be a class not over-much to be trusted. Others of that sect who are always foreboding evil, began to predict and prophesy that Mrs Skeldrin would some day see the folly of having permitted her daughter to go on in the improper way she was doing, and feel reason to regret the liberty and indulgence they fancied she was too freely extending.

It was soon, however, discovered for certainty, that an immediate matrimonial alliance, between the parties in question, was contemplated in earnest; for the daughter of Mrs Curmuddie had somehow or other managed to overhear arrangements made concerning it. She likewise found out that Miss Golloch was about to go home on a visit, and that it was under consideration or expected that Miss Skeldrin should go with her, for the double purpose of bearing Miss Golloch company in her travels, and getting herself introduced into the family of her intended father-in-law. Any behind-door lounging, or other ingenious devices, that Katie Curmuddie might have practised in the getting of this intelligence, may perhaps be excused, under the circumstances that induced them. But for the telling to her mother what she had heard, she could hardly be considered responsible, as opening her mind fully to her parent on all subjects coming under her notice, had from her earliest days been inculcated as a solemn and necessary duty.

Mrs Curmuddie was very much displeased at hearing such a trip was proposed; and Mrs Artichoke agreed with her that some mistake had surely been made, their idea being that no proceeding of the kind would ever be sanctioned at head-quarters, as it was, in their way of thinking, soon enough for the Skeldrins to gut fish once they got them, and equally soon enough to take the trip after the knot was tied.

For all this, it was quickly proved that Mrs Skeldrin's

views on the subject had been quite different from those expressed for her by Mrs Curmuddie; as, before many days passed, after the intention of this journey getting abroad, the Thistle Ha' car, driven by Mr Skeldrin, and containing his daughter dressed for a journey, with the usual allowance of band-boxes and reticules necessary on such occasions to complete a lady's travelling equipments, stopped at the door of Dr Golloch's residence. Here they were joined by the doctor and Miss Golloch, when the journey was resumed, and they drove off to the railway station, as was supposed from their proceeding in that direction, by a road which led to no other place in particular. This proceeding created a considerable sensation in the village. Everybody was on the alert to see them, and all the wives turned out to

“Look after the low-backed car,”

and stood shading their eyes with one hand, and twisting their aprons with the other, and staring after them till out of sight. When nothing more was to be seen, they collected in small groups, to hear or communicate the results of the survey. The doctor being with the party, to all appearance showed that there had been some defect in the previously-acquired information, the general impression now being, that he would be intending to get married before their return, after some fashion or other, of which the villagers stood in ignorance. This idea appeared destined to have but a limited existence. In a comparatively short time, the vehicle was seen returning; and those wives and idlers of a very futile nature, who were still standing disputing on the subject, had the opportunity of seeing the doctor return with Mr Skeldrin. But this occurrence, by dispelling their first conjectures, furnished a new series of surmises for them to renew or continue their discussions upon.

Mr Skeldrin, after setting down the doctor at his

own house, met in with Mr Gobbler, who had been down in the village on some purpose or other; and that gentleman volunteering to share a mutchkin with Mr Skeldrin, they repaired to the "Cheerie Farmers," to partake of that or some other refreshment of the kind, as both thought they would be all the better of something to keep up their spirits during their journey home, which they now agreed to make in company, as they had been so fortunate as to meet.

CHAPTER XII.

To think the morals o' our toun,
That aye were so discreet,
Are now so toozled up and down,—
It's like to gaur me greet.

"So ye see they've got her awa, as I tell'd ye," said Mrs Curmuddie to her friend Mrs Artichoke, whom she went to see very shortly after Miss Skeldrin had gone off with Miss Golloch, as has been recorded.

"So I believe," returned Mrs Artichoke; "but tae tell you the truth, I hardly thocht it wad be allowed;—no tae say I didna believe you were only saying as ye heard, when ye first tell'd me aboot it;—but I think it's a fearfu' daft-like thing o' the Skeldrins lettin' their dochter gang fleein' up and down the country that gaet."

"Daft like!—Fearfu' ill a'thegither, is liker't; and I'm in the mind mysel' that it's a' that, and mair," said Mrs Curmuddie. "But the langer folk leeves, the mair uncos they see."

"I daresay ye're richt, after a'," said Mrs Artichoke; "but it looks as if there was really tae be something o't noo; tho', for my part, I hardly thocht him ane o' the kind that wad be in ony hurry; but it looks like it was comin' near the bit noo, if 'the swine dinna rin through't."

"Like's a ill mark, Mrs Archychok," returned her friend, with a comic leer on her face. "A boss tatie's whyles no easy kenn'd till the skin's broken, and it's *often queer wather in the wast whan the wund's in the east. It's no easy kennin' hoo things is noo-a-days.*"

"That's true; ye're richt there," replied Mrs Artichoke. "I like nane o' thae things that's dune owre easy. It's aboot the same thing tae pit herrin' on a straught spit as on a crookit ane; but they stick firmest, whaur the way on's been gie bow'd, ye ken that, Mrs Curmuddie?"

"Fine I ken that; but whirlin' the grundin'-stane half round an' back again, is aboot the same as round a' the way; and we maun come and gang a wee bit," replied Mrs Curmuddie.

"I alloo a' that," replied Mrs Artichoke; "and they may be weel enough, tho' they've been oot o' the way a wee, tae our thinkin'. But we ken chuckie-stanes wad be diamints, if diamints was only chuckie-stanes; and that the guid things atween them shouldna be lookit at owre disdainfu'; but we canna say yet hoo he may swee, so it's best tae leave that alane. D'ye ken if it's tae be sune, you that's in the way o' hearin' o' a' thae things?"

"Quietly speakin', Mrs Archychok," returned Mrs Curmuddie, "my lassie tells me that it's tae tak place as sune's she comes back, or very shortly after; and that he's in a unco poker aboot it, an' thinks an awfu' lot o' the bit puir peasweep-lookin' crater."

"I've heard some sayin' thae thocht it was a bit blythe-faced taed o' a thing," returned Mrs Artichoke; "tho' frae a' the bit gliffs I've gotten, I couldna judge. But ae man's meat's anither man's pushen; only some thocht that he wad look'd some ither airt, and no 'ca'd his hogs tae sic a puir market.' But tho' the lassie's maybe weel enough, and better than him for a' I ken, some folk think he micht hae gotten something liker his country, tae say the least o't."

"Ay, till ance I heard it for dead truth, I thocht the same mysel'," returned Mrs Curmuddie, always wishing to be upsides with every opinion. "But as it is, it's jist as we were sayin'; he's gettin' a bonny lot o' ill-will and envy frae some o' the folk—I mean the brow

anes, that's no lettin' on they're disappointed—no the paltry craters. But he's very richt tae please himsel'; an' he's nae waur at ony rate whaur he's gaun tae stap in, than if he had gaen some o' the places whaur he was expected, and sae muckle tried for."

"If it's wi' thae reekit, yellow-neckit, broun-faced, gipsy-lookin', ill-faur'd, trollopin' tawpies up the toun there, I wad say he's far better; tho', I daresay, it's their faither maks them no likit," returned Mrs Artichoke, with great emphasis on her various adjectives, as her wrath rose at the idea. "My certie! Tawse had the wrang sow by the lug when he began tryin' on his capers wi' him. He was sair'd, tae my mind at ony rate, when the doctor gied him sic a guid hearty chirtin', and I think he was a awfu' deal the better o' what he got."

"Ay, he'll be like tae eat his fingers noo, when he sees what's what," said Mrs Curmuddie; "for there was nae doot something o't, wi' his brucket dawls, frae what Miss M'Keeker saw, and the way they've been gaun on since. I wonder hoo the saft tawpie will be lookin' noo?" she continued, laughing heartily at the thought of what she alluded to. "I'm thinkin' she'll be wishin' a' the hairs o' her toozie head that she hadna been sae ready wi' her scribblin'; but it'll be a warnin' tae her next time, tae be a wee thocht mair cautious, tho' maybe, if it wasna that weary faither o' theirs, they wadna be sae witless."

"They say," rejoined Mrs Artichoke, "that they've begun again as brisk as ever owre that ill-faur'd, muirland-lookin' haingle, wha's been hingin' aboot Thrissle Ha' for a lang time;—the ane ye ken that the doctor pat oot;—at ony rate, he's been seen wi' the Tawses o' late. Ye ken, the folk's sayin' there's something under it, an' I shouldna wonder if they're richt tae."

"Noo when you speak o't," returned Mrs Curmuddie, "*I mind fine*, when the doctor first began tae gae aboot Thrissle Ha', o' hearin' that he was takin' the

butter aff somebody's bread; but no bein' weel acquant thereawa, I never heard partickler. Is *that* the same ane that's been doun at Tawse's? I've seen him; and, my guidness! I wadna thocht a muirland effiger like yon wad ever haen the face tae stap in ony place whaur he was asket, let alane haein' the persumption tae gang ony gaet o' his ain head. Him tae warstle wi' the doctor in a thing o' that kind! Preserve me! what 'ill we be hearin' next?"

"It's quite true, at ony rate, that he did that," returned Mrs Artichoke; "and my laddie Willie tells me, that when he's up at Thrissle Ha' wi' the doctor, he sometimes sees the scraper slinkin' aboot there; and some o' the servant laddies tell'd him that he's awfu' wicked at the lassie Skeldrin bein' ta'en oot o' his teeth; and Willie says Mr Tawse speaks wi' him unco frank frae his or'nar."

"O then, it'll jist be the same hullion," returned Mrs Curmuddie. "I'm sure it's a perfet divert tae think o' the Tawses haein' sic a desperate job tae get aff! It'll no fail on their side if they dinna; but they're no like tae mak it oot, wi' a' their fecht! I doot, there's no muckle houp o' them noo; for they're no at a' temptin' pennywo'ths, and they've been in the market sae lang, and their ways are sae weel kenn'd, that it's no like tae be ony o' the folk hereawa that'll lift them noo; for the maist o' them hae been through hands already."

"I dinna think they're the sort for muirland farmers' wives at a' at a'," returned Mrs Artichoke, shaking her head. "They're sic a pingin', daidlin' set, and hae far owre muckle pertensions tae 'my Leddie' wi' them, for paidlin' aboot byres, an' workin' awa among kye and beasts o' thae kind; but I daresay they're sae keen tae get aff, and think they'll be a' sae richt if they were ance married, that they wadna gie themselves muckle thocht aboot it, but wad snap him like a cragie-heron wi' a puddock."

"*Snap him!* I believe that, Mrs Archychok," replied

Mrs Curmuddie; "but some o' thae muirland linties is no easy catch'd wi' caff, silly craters an' a' as they look like; and maybe this fallow is owre auld a cat tae draw a strae afore tae."

"If it's true they're after him, an' hae got the chap fair doun among them," said Mrs Artichoke, "time at any rate 'ill tell what they're to mak o' him; but it's nae doot something in the match-makin' kind they've in their e'e, or they wadna gie muckle encouragement to either ane or other to come aboot their house at a'. My certie, no! they're nane o' the sort. It's either a' tak, an' nae gie, or gie for gie, wi' them. Fient a haet ever I heard tell o' onybody gettin' frae them yet for naething, unless something very queer was at the bottom o't, an' a fair prospeck o' a guid return, or something for their trouble no far ahint."

"I'm sure they can mak a kirk-an'-a-mill o' the puir wizen'd whistle-whaup, if they like, for me, Mrs Archy-chok," returned Mrs Curmuddie. "Onybody that has a bawbee to jingle on anither ane is the folk for them; but folk canna help bein' baith vexed and angry to see sic a racket and kick-up as is made to mak in wi' a set o' puir iggerant, useless, guid-for-naething vratches, wha nane on yirth wad gie a snuff for, if they didna happen to hae twa-three score o' waesome-lookin' objects o' sheep gaun roarin' wi' perfet starvation owre a bare, cauld hill, that wad mak ane hungry to look at, frae as far awa's he could see it;—an' a' the fuss made, tae, by a pack o' puir, paltry naethings, wha think themselves nae sma' drink, because they happen to hae a bit sma' job by the hand, that *whyles* brings them beside their betters, wha they try to copy; but they micht as weel thing to flee in the air as do as *they* do, though they *had* the wherewitha'."

"O yes, woman, it's a' true ye're sayin'," returned Mrs Artichoke. "Gie them onybody aboon their ain *station* (or what they *think's* aboon't), and they're a' *richt*. They wad lie doun and let them dance owre

them, or dae onything for favour. But them that winna look at gaun folk, the riders gae past them; and its jist the way they deserve to be sair'd; for it wadna dae if they got a' their ain wull and ither folks' baith."

"It is a pity but collie had a gravat, Mrs Archychok," said Mrs Curmuddie. "If it was to be as they wad like, it wadna be easy to say what things would come tae. It wad sune be as bad as ae dog keepin' anither to drive the sheep for't, and takin' up its maister's plaid to lie on't itsel'."

"We'll jist leave them to cut the coal as the seam rins, at ony rate, Mrs Curmuddie," replied Mrs Artichoke; "and we'll see or hear something surely o' what they mak o' this man o' theirs; an' I fancy it'll no be lang or this lassie Skeldrin comes back again."

"No, sae far as I can say," returned Mrs Curmuddie; "but Katie 'ill likely hear something aboot it. At ony rate, the thing's said to be a' fixed to tak place ance they do come back. I'll maybe see you before then; but I'll be biddin' ye guid-day the noo, as I think we've gien the maist o' things a bit gie scrunt."

"I'm real sorry there's no a drap in the house the day," said Mrs Artichoke; "but I hope I'll no be sae ill set next time I hae the pleesure o' seein' you doun."

"Hoot-toot! my canny woman," replied Mrs Curmuddie; "never let that pit ye the sma'est aboot;" and nodding her head, and smiling very pleasantly, she bade her friend again good-day.

CHAPTER XIII.

At lang and length the lucky time,
For which we looked so dreigh,
Has come! but what can Johnny mean,
That he's sae awfu' skeigh?

THE Tawse's had been exceedingly anxious to make up closer acquaintance with Mr Gobbler, from the time the Misses had the good fortune and pleasure of procuring his escort from Thistle Ha', on which occasion, it will be recollected, he declined their solicitous requests to go into the house, from some innate dread of their father which it seemed he entertained.

Mr Tawse had seen him occasionally after that when on his visits to Thistle Ha', and had on every occasion invited him, in the most cordial manner possible, to visit him at Bramble-Green; but Mr Gobbler had either never found an opportunity of doing so, or had entertained some wish to keep clear of them altogether; for he did not put himself to the trouble of going near them, although, for the sake of quietness, he had often promised he would, when too vehemently pressed on the subject. This was the cause of considerable uneasiness to the young ladies, who could not at all understand why the gentleman was so very stiff and shy, or what could be his reasons for keeping himself aloof, or how he could ever manage to do so when such temptation was in his way.

Nevertheless, to the great delight of the Misses Tawse, the time arrived, when, thanks to their father's *perseverance*, this much-desired object was attained.

Mr Tawse, always on the look-out, and at hand when

anything was going, happened to be passing up the village with his pruning-ladder over his shoulder, and a bunch of shreds of an old mortcloth he had procured from Charlie Spades dangling from the top step. He was on his way to the "Cheerie Farmers," to try the effect of a new discovery he had made, whereby the pear-tree on the gable of the Inn was to be greatly improved by an alphabetical arrangement in the training of its branches. Mr Skeldrin and Mr Gobbler had only entered the "Farmers" for their refreshment a minute or two before Mr Tawse thus passed up the village; and he seeing the Thistle Ha' conveyance at the door, concluded that Mr Skeldrin would be within, and sent a boy home with the ladder, thinking it better to leave the tree for a future occasion. On entering, of course, he ascertained that Mr Skeldrin was really there, and that he and Mr Gobbler were enjoying their grog in the best sanded room. Much ceremony not being requisite, Mr Tawse merely opened the door, and looked in, when he was asked to join them.

Without requiring much pressing, Mr Tawse did so, and commenced at the very outset to express his happiness at meeting with Mr Gobbler in such warm terms, that even Mr Skeldrin observed it with a little surprise. Mr Tawse made himself uncommonly agreeable, and called in an additional mutchkin, a step which he was very seldom known to be so rash as take when he could avoid it. But his liberality did not stop with this; for ere the supply was exhausted, he signified his wish that they should accompany him to his home, and have a comfortable tumbler there after tea. This was objected to by both Mr Skeldrin and Mr Gobbler; but Mr Tawse told them, in his own humorous way, that he would take no denial, but have them with him right or wrong; so Mr Skeldrin had do resource, but to suppose there would be nothing else for it; and Mr Skrews was summoned, and instructed to get the pony stabled, when *the two went off with Mr Tawse.*

Their arrival was an unexampled happiness to the inmates of the school-house, the young ladies and their mamma being, as may be supposed, quite enraptured with Mr Gobbler. He held his cap in the hand extended to shake theirs; but they removed it, and shook hands very cordially with him, a proceeding which increased his erubescency many shades.

Every attention they could show was paid him; and Mr Tawse was very jocular, and threw out a great many hints as to the lonely life Mr Gobbler was leading, which caused a great tittering among the daughters, who no doubt thought their "pa" very witty in his remarks, and particularly severe on Mr Gobbler.

Tea was served, and Mr Gobbler partook very heartily. The half-dozen cookies that had been got in when he arrived lay on a plate at his corner of the table. He appeared so fond of them, as to threaten their total destruction at the first cup. Mrs Tawse saw the danger, and made a diversion towards their relief, by attempting to assist him to a piece of other bread; but he told her the "broun things was fine." She grew alarmed, and left the room, when Mr Tawse was sent for "to speak a little." He went, and both returned again in two or three minutes. It was quite apparent to the Misses that mamma had been drawing on the financial custodier, and that she had been successful. Time was allowed sufficient to admit of a trip to the baker's, when Mrs Tawse told one of the Misses to get a little more tea-bread. This made Mr Tawse very angry. He told Mrs Tawse to ring for it. His family could not be degraded by setting down plates before strangers! A ring was given, and answered by the kitchen Psyche, who brought in a paper-bag, without first asking what was wanted. This made Mrs Tawse take a very red face; but she bore up, and succeeded in extracting from the parcel another threepence-worth of the "broun things."

While tea was thus going on, Mr Tawse adroitly

managed, in the easy style peculiar to himself, to laugh Mr Gobbler into the belief, that he had given a very kind invitation to the young ladies to visit him at Blawdreary. Though the surprised look of Mr Gobbler, on hearing this proposition, clearly indicated that he wished for no such act of kindness, Mr Tawse had the invitation formally accepted with a great many thanks, almost before Mr Gobbler thoroughly understood them to be in earnest, as he hardly thought they were fully determined to lay siege to his quiet moorland retreat. Mr Tawse, notwithstanding, made it very plainly understood, that it was just to be as he proposed; and to make the arrangements for going all complete while dealing with the subject, he got Mr Skeldrin to promise the loan of his conveyance for the occasion.

Sure enough, on the day of his threatened invasion. Mr Tawse and his daughters did go over to Blawdreary; and greatly to Mr Gobbler's disappointment, having been the whole forenoon on the alert to elude them on their arrival, he was detected in the act of skulking off, and brought back in triumph by Mr Tawse.

The consternation of old Mrs Gobbler at seeing the vehicle draw up, as she had known nothing whatever of it beforehand, was very great. She could not at all make out what possible reason such a cart-load of women could have for coming to that part of the world. Her son felt too much abashed to say a word about them; but when she was informed by Mr Tawse, who was forced to act as interpreter, that they were acquaintances of her son who had come on a visit, she was more astonished than ever, and gave them anything but a hearty reception, hinting very broadly that their company was not at all desired. These growling hints, though very plain, were quite lost in their end; for the guests were none of the sort to be got quit of so very easily.

They stayed and partook of tea, not very ostentatiously served; and when they at length began to think of departing, a heavy fall of rain came on, and, greatly to the aggravation of Mrs Gobbler, they agreed to delay till it went off, although she expressed a conviction that the duration of the storm would be next to perpetual, and recommended an early departure.

At this positive thwarting of her wish, the sea of fury, which Mrs Gobbler had been damming in as well as she possibly could, began to lash like to sweep away the tottering embankment which had restrained it; but, by a great effort, she deferred a little longer, and, luckily for the visitors, they got shoved off before it reached bursting pressure.

Her unfortunate son, knowing what was in store for him, kept aloof till pretty late, in the hope of escaping her rage; but she sat up for him, and when he did slip in, she opened upon him in full vehemence, threatening to leave him, his house, and all he possessed, to go to wreck and ruin, if she was to be disturbed again in the way she had been. It was in vain he protested that they had come as much against his inclination as against hers, and that he had no wish to see them back again, and would prevent any repetition of their visit; but Mrs Gobbler would believe nothing of what he said, and went off to bed in her wrath.

To say the truth, Mr Gobbler had, indeed, been very little concerned about the Tawses beyond the uneasiness their presence had caused him; and though he quite understood what end they had in view in making such an ado about him, he felt nothing interested in them at all, the great anxiety with which he waited for the marriage, which was soon expected to take place at Thistle Ha', being quite enough to be upon his mind.

By the time the husband-hunting party reached home, the ardour of the Misses Tawse had got considerably damped; for their high ideas of Blawdreary had greatly

fallen, after viewing the stern reality. They also got their muslins pretty well soaked by the heavy shower of rain, to the tender mercies of which they were exposed in the course of their drive home, and which served, in a great measure, to wash all the finely-pictured thoughts of the future they had framed going up, almost thoroughly from the canvass of their imaginations, and they sullenly hinted their convictions of the failure of their expedition. Their father showed himself somewhat displeased at the ingratitude conveyed in their remarks, after his goodness in trying all he could for them; but, at the same time, he felt for them too, and comforted them with an assurance, that the saying, "a faint heart never won a fair lady," held equally good so far as concerned the winning of gentlemen. He encouraged them to keep up their spirits, as he had great hopes yet of securing Mr Gobbler, or some one as good, and impressed on their minds the fact that he had done all he could for them; but he also told them, that if they were discontented, and would not take his advice, they could do as they pleased, and let all their acquaintances off before them. This last philosophic remark startled them into their senses, and they resolved to submit themselves entirely to the guidance of their kind and worthy parent, who had already done so much for them, without troubling him any more with reproaches for the want of success in matters of this kind, when it lay beyond his power to attain other results.

Though pretty far on in the evening when they got back, Mr Tawse was for setting out again himself, and taking the vehicle home to Thistle Ha,' although a boy had been sent over for the purpose by Mr Skeldrin, to save Mr Tawse that trouble. He was rather unwilling to abandon such an excellent opportunity of getting to Thistle Ha', when, in his opinion, he had such a first-rate excuse for going; but on his wife hinting that it would be far better, and look fully as well if he put it off till the next day, and then called to inquire if the

cart had been returned in safety, he consented to follow her suggestion. He remained at home, taking a quiet tumbler, to compensate for the supply he had expected to carry off from Thistle Ha', which Mrs Tawse very willingly allowed him, for the purpose of restoring his good humour. This required to be done, before he would be willing to enter fully into all the details of the visit, with such exactness as to enable her to get the clear understanding she wished to have of the success of the expedition.

CHAPTER XIV.

The time hangs dreary on us,
And we weary by our lane;
And I doot, I doot we'll no can rest
Till she come back again.

JEANIE SKELDRIN had scarcely ever been from under her father's roof, till the present occasion of her going away with Miss Golloch; and her absence was consequently felt so much both by her father and mother, that before she had been many days away, they got anxious for the time of her return; and this anxiety soon increased to a regret that they had trusted her so far out of their sight.

Mrs Skeldrin did not *say* very much about it; for she knew if she did give out any uneasy symptoms, either on her own account, or as sympathizing with her husband in his occasional grumblings, that he would be certain to give her a blowing up, and make her entirely responsible, both for Jeanie's having gone away, and for the consequences, if anything should go wrong on the journey. It was true, that they had heard from her of her safe arrival at her intended father-in-law's,—of the kind reception she had received at their hands, and of the satisfaction that had been expressed regarding the proposed union, in every way connected with it. This, no doubt, made Mrs Skeldrin in particular very happy, and she looked forward with great delight and anxiety to the joyful future into which Jeanie was about to enter.

For the purpose of allaying Mrs Skeldrin's whinings for her daughter's return, the doctor, during her

absence, made a point of going to Thistle Ha' as frequently as he could find opportunity. But although he told Mrs Skeldrin again and again, that she would soon have occasion to weary more, as he would be taking her daughter away altogether ere long, and Mrs Skeldrin was highly delighted at hearing this, and admitted the truth of what the doctor said; yet she teased him so much to summon his sister to return, and bring back Jeanie, that he promised to communicate with them, and request them to return as early as they could conveniently arrange for leaving.

For two or three days after making this promise, it happened that the doctor was so closely employed, that he could not possibly find time to get to Thistle Ha' as usual; but as no reply had reached him as to when his sister and Miss Skeldrin might be expected back, and barely time having elapsed for hearing from them, he did not consider his absence would be of very great moment. Mrs Skeldrin somehow got so uneasy about this long, unlooked-for, and unexplained delay on the part of the doctor, that she despatched her husband to ascertain whether any intelligence had been received, and why the doctor had not let them know of it.

Mr Skeldrin arrived in Bramble-Green for this purpose; but on reaching the doctor's, he learned that he had just left home a few minutes before, having been summoned to a case at a distance, where there was every probability of his being detained, and his return postponed till a late hour of the evening. From the servant Mr Skeldrin ascertained that the doctor had been away on business almost all the two preceding days and nights, which explained his absence from Thistle Ha'; also that she thought the Misses would be home very soon, as the doctor had been saying the previous day that he expected them. This appeared satisfactory enough to Mr Skeldrin; and he not having been quite so much put about as his wife, considered

that as she would not be a very great deal the wiser of all he had gleaned, there was no particular hurry in carrying the scanty intelligence home, especially as this favourable state of affairs existed. What influenced him as much as anything in forming this conclusion, was an aversion to going direct home again, without seeing his friend Mr Tawse, as he was so near his residence. He accordingly drove down to the "Cheerie Farmers," and got Mr Skrews to send a boy for Mr Tawse, who arrived on the spot in a moment, quite glad at the opportunity of getting a glass, as he had happened to be a little elated the previous evening. They had a tumbler together; but Mr Tawse, after the first round, would not hear of moving without a second, and the result was, that the two worthies sat on the greater part of the day.

Mr Skeldrin's absence from Thistle Ha' was not such a very unusual occurrence as to put his wife about on ordinary occasions; but in the present instance, when such an important purpose had taken him to the village, she never had the slightest thought or even suspected that he would be engaged as he was. Although particular business had taken him down at times, and similar results had followed; yet on this occasion the absence was construed, and something very grievous, of course connected with Jeanie, assigned as the reason of it, which result, it may easily be presumed, tended greatly to increase her mother's fears. As Mrs Skeldrin had thus no idea of the true position of the delay, it may be guessed she felt very much exasperated at finding her husband return "half-seas over," and almost unable to tell her anything. Very "loud was her wail" at his carelessness and cruelty, in keeping her in suspense the whole day; and a thorough hail-storm of scolding was in the course of being turned upon him, when the doctor rode up to the door. He entered with such a captivating smile on his face, that it was at once translated into favourable news by Mrs Skeldrin, and

the sun of good-nature soon shone again, and dissolved the most of her well-stored clouds of vengeance, which eventually drifted off into the sky of oblivion.

The doctor fully satisfied Mrs Skeldrin, by explaining the cause of his absence; and produced a letter from his sister, which contained the welcome intelligence that she and Miss Skeldrin were to leave on a day named, and would be at the station at a certain time, if no obstacles prevented their intentions being carried out. The letter of Miss Golloch also contained one from Miss Skeldrin to her mother, to the same purport, and requesting that her father might be over with the gig, to meet them on their arrival. All this afforded Mrs Skeldrin the utmost satisfaction, amidst the regret and uneasiness that had disturbed her in the course of the day. In her joy, she quite forgave her husband's transgression, though she at the same time resisted firmly his urgent requests for "another tumbler" along with the doctor. She considered he had got quite enough, and told him so, when he endeavoured to sway her into the belief that it was for the doctor alone he wished it; but this plea was overturned also, as the doctor saw how the land lay, and declined positively to partake under any consideration whatever, giving sundry spot-coined reasons, gladly received and accepted by Mrs Skeldrin. Foiled on all sides, Mr Skeldrin had to remain satisfied with what he had got; and being in a very talkative mood, he kept the doctor with him a long time hearing his stories, greatly to the uneasiness of Mr Gobbler, who had been in the neighbourhood of Thistle Ha' when the doctor arrived, and was now ensconced behind a hedge, impatiently and anxiously waiting to see the doctor pass on his return. His object in this was merely that he might get in without the risk of encountering the doctor, which he had always endeavoured and frequently managed to avoid, by dint of his dodging and skulking powers. These he always called to his assistance whenever circumstances threatened to bring

him into too close proximity to the doctor; and although Mr Skeldrin had often attempted to convince him of the unnecessary trouble he gave himself, by bolting out of sight every time he happened to see that gentleman, he always did so, except when in the house or other places, where he could not well get sheered off.

Mr Gobbler had good patience, although he got pretty tired before he had the gratification of seeing the doctor set out on his way home; but he persevered till that pleasure was afforded, when he escaped from his hiding-place with all expedition, and made the best of his way to the house. Mrs Skeldrin, considering the already-alluded-to state of her husband, had no wish to admit any visitors; and Mr Gobbler would have been turned at the door, had it not been that Mr Skeldrin recognised his voice, and ordered him to be admitted.

Mrs Skeldrin was busily engaged preparing a glass of toddy for her husband when Mr Gobbler arrived, her doing this, after her former refusal, being intended to serve as a reward for his having kept within reasonable bounds with his request for it when the doctor was present. The tumbler was quietly placed out of sight before Mr Gobbler entered; but Mr Skeldrin demanded and insisted on its production, and also on another being set down for Mr Gobbler. Mr Gobbler could make toddy very well and very willingly, and finished glass-about with Mr Skeldrin, which eventually resulted in a regular "set-to."

In the course of their potations, Mr Skeldrin opened out very freely, and told Mr Gobbler all that was to take place concerning the marriage of Jeanie, and even proposed to have him at the ceremony, if he would agree to be present. Mrs Skeldrin felt sorry, in case he might feel disposed to accept the invitation; but was very soon relieved by hearing him disapprove of the proposition, and decline very distinctly to have anything to do in the matter. Some egregiously scandalous and disre-

spectful remarks, in reference to the doctor, which emanated from him in the course of conversation, determined Mrs Skeldria to use her exertions, once she should see her husband fairly sober again, and by a bold attempt endeavour to get Mr Gobbler prohibited from coming near the house any more.- As the door closed behind him that night, her heart-felt wish, that it might be the last time, was uttered aloud; and if he heard her words indistinctly, they were only broken by the angry clang of the door, which perhaps conveyed her meaning as clearly as she could have desired.

CHAPTER XV.

ALL was still within the mansion; the bell was loudly rung,
And awe was in the echo of its rusty iron tongue.
When silently they entered, there was naught to greet them there,
But a letter, sadly written in a suicide's despair!

ON the evening of the day named for the return of the travellers, Mr Skeldrin was at the station awaiting the arrival of the train with which they were expected. He had called for the doctor in passing, as he had likewise promised to go to meet them, but he had unluckily been absent from home. He had left word, however, that Mr and Miss Skeldrin were to be asked to wait his return, which he calculated would be very shortly after the time they might be expected to reach his residence on their way from the station.

The train did not arrive at the time it was expected, and Mr Skeldrin diverted his time betwixt lazily parading the platform, and standing looking wistfully in the direction whence they should approach. It was a tiresome wait. He compared the hours on his own antiquated time-indicator with the station clock a hundred times; asked the station-master about as often what was wrong, and received over again the same satisfactory reply, that "she was late," with an occasional guess at the name of the station where the delay might probably have occurred as likely as at another. But it greatly relieved the monotony when the doctor rode up to the place, and expressed his happiness at having been fortunate enough to get forward in time.

A few minutes, thereafter, the whistle was heard sounding, and the train came gliding along, and drew

up at the platform, the engine hissing and snorting in its eagerness to continue the journey. Mr Skeldrin had soon the happiness of seeing his daughter and Miss Golloch handed to the platform by the doctor, and safely seated in the vehicle; and when he had resumed his position as driver, the happy party started on their way home. The doctor rode alongside talking to the ladies, unheeded by Mr Skeldrin, whose whole energies and attention were required to keep the pony on the right road, as the train had made it rather restive.

By-and-by, when they were so far on the road that the rattling groans of the train, as it proceeded on its journey, got out of their hearing, the pony resumed the usual trot, and Mr Skeldrin found time to introduce a remark now and again, mixed up with inquiries as to how they had got on in their travels, and if they had found the old man and all at home well. In this way they moved along very cheerfully, and, through the driver's skill and caution, succeeded in reaching Bramble-Green in perfect safety.

Miss Golloch alighted at her own door, and Mr Skeldrin proposed that Jeanie and he should go right on without delay, as it was getting pretty late. The doctor would not listen to this, but insisted on their going in a little, as he thought that Miss Skeldrin would be a great deal the better of resting a short time after her lengthy journey. As an additional inducement to their complying with his request, the doctor was kind enough to promise to take a drive with them the greater part of their way home, as he had a patient in the direction whom he remembered it would be as well for him to see that night. Mr Skeldrin was next very speedily argued into the belief that he would be nothing the worse of a little of something or other himself, before setting out to complete the rest of the journey that was yet to be gone over; and without *further* persuasions, he got down for the purpose *indicated*.

Miss Golloch had rung the door-bell three or four times before the doctor succeeded in prevailing upon his two friends to leave the conveyance; but neither the servant girl, nor the lad who took charge of the horse, seemed to be in attendance, as no notice was taken. The doctor pulled the bell again, and still there was no answer; but Willie made his appearance breathless with running; and in reply to the doctor's inquiries, as to why he had been so far out of the way when wanted, he stammered an excuse to the effect that he had just been down for a minute seeing his mother, and having observed them pass, he had followed as fast after them as he could.

"Is Katie somewhere too?" inquired the doctor. "We can't get into the house."

"I dinna ken, sir," he returned; "but I'll gang round and see."

He went round to the kitchen-door, which he found to be locked, with the key sticking outside, which showed plainly enough that Katie was certainly not in the house. Willie did not take time to think or comment on where she would be, as he had seen the doctor was not over-well pleased, but turned the key, and ran through the passage to the front-door, which he opened with considerable expedition.

"So she's not in either, I see," said the doctor, as Willie emerged from the door round which they were standing. "I suppose she'll be at her mother's for a minute too! It's not like Katie to behave in this way, when she knew we would be coming. Look to the horses, and see they don't start off."

They entered a room, where there was little or no light, but the glimmering of the fire; and the servant not being at hand, Miss Golloch went to the kitchen to procure candles, and see about preparing something for her friends to partake of.

She returned in a few minutes with the lights, and handed a letter to the doctor, which she said had been

lying on the kitchen-table, and then proceeded with the arrangements for getting some refreshments set down.

"You'll excuse my looking what this is, in case it should be something pressing," said the doctor, rising and approaching near the light. He looked at the address with some curiosity; and as he tore open the cover, something that had been enclosed along with the letter dropped on the floor, which at once arrested the notice of Mr Skeldrin and his daughter, who exchanged glances as they saw the doctor's countenance alter, but made no remarks.

"What on earth can this mean?" he said, looking somewhat embarrassed as he picked up the fallen article, which proved to be a good-sized hank of human hair. It had been rolled round to suit the size of the envelope in which it had been enclosed, and on being released from the place of confinement, it had sprung out of the coils in the descent to the floor.

"I really cannot explain this at all," continued the doctor, as he placed the hair on the table beside the cover, and proceeded to read the letter considerably excited.

Miss Golloch, on seeing this, halted in her progress up and down the house; while Miss Skeldrin turned very pale, and seemed much perplexed; and her father stood staring in great astonishment, and looking as if he had just awoke from some horrifying dream, with a strong conviction of its reality still haunting him.

"Good God!" ejaculated the doctor, with intense agitation, as he went on reading, "this is the most extraordinary document I ever saw; I really can't understand it. Look at it, Sarah," he said, as he threw it on the table, and sat back in a chair as if quite overcome.

"What is it, Hornie?" returned his sister, lifting the letter with a most terrified look, and shaking with alarm at seeing her brother in such a state of consternation.

"Read it! read it aloud, Sarah," he exclaimed, as she lifted it. "I declare to Heaven I know nothing of it."

Miss Golloch obeyed, and began as follows:—

"Foorsday."

"Dockter Golluch, i leeve loke o har in rememrans o me its luv And fekshin as is brocht me to this Measurebl stait—I wis yu and yur intendent in life much hapynes we met No Mor in yerth i hops to meat in heving a hop God ull forgiv Me and hae mersy on my sole remaens yours infekshnat katie Curmuddie and mak no serch for me cus it ull be all in vane."

"Come away, Jeanie! come away!" said Mr Skeldrin, in a fury, and stamping his feet in his rage. "I see it all—I see it all! If you had taken my advice, Jeanie, it would not have come to this! Come away!"

Miss Skeldrin looked at first quite stupified; but gradually comprehending what was meant, she rose, and trembling all over, took her father's arm, and proceeded to leave the room.

"I hope you won't go off in that way, my dear sir," said the doctor, getting a little more collected. "I do declare this is a matter I have no understanding of whatever. I'm sure I regret having been so rash in opening that stupid packet. If I had had the least idea what it was, I would not have done so; but I thought it was something else, or it would"—

"I perfectly believe you did, sir," returned Mr Skeldrin, in a kind of ironical tone; "but I see how the whole matter is, and understand it too, though you profess to be so much at a loss, and can put such a good face on your ill deeds. I always was afraid it would come to something as bad as this. But come away, Jeanie," he continued; "we've been too long under his roof!"

"I can excuse any thing, sir, you may say in your present state," returned the doctor, "as I am unable to *give any explanation* of this extraordinary circumstance;

only I wouldn't have expected you to go quite so far, though you have"——

"So you may 'excuse' what I've said," replied Mr Skeldrin, who, with his daughter holding on by his arm, and trembling violently, had now reached the door; "and I shouldn't wonder though you expected to be 'excused' too," he added, as he handed his daughter into the van more dead than alive.

"I trust this awkward matter will, on inquiry, be satisfactorily explained," replied the doctor; but Mr Skeldrin was not in a mood for saying more, and beyond partially bidding Miss Golloch good-night, he drove off without further ceremony.

CHAPTER XVI.

Whence is this downcast and afflicted look?
Sure my presentiments to ill pertained,
And this betokens evil.

NEITHER Mr Skeldrin nor his daughter spoke very much on the way home; in fact, they remained entirely silent, with the exception of two or three ill-natured remonstrances addressed by him to the horse, for sundry real or supposed stammers it made.

Poor Jeanie thought again and again of what had occurred; but she could come to no conclusion on the subject, except that, whatever reason there might be for it, the doctor could not possibly have anything to do with causing the servant girl to take the rash course indicated in the letter. No! he could never have been so cruel and deceiving, as to give the servant any reason for thinking he entertained any regard for her. But again, there was surely something under it, or why would the girl have taken into her head to adopt the rash resolve her letter alluded to? She sighed as she asked herself this question; for she felt as if she were wronging the doctor, by allowing even a thought of this kind to arise, and reproached herself for her harshness and want of feeling in even imagining him to be guilty of such a proceeding; for, after all he had said to her, could he be guilty of what she had ventured to accuse him of? No, no! She felt sorry at having left him in the hard-hearted way she had done, and regretted having parted without at least bidding farewell to him who had always been so kind, and whom she had loved, and even yet *did* love so well. Poor Jeanie! she had

never before found occasion to perplex herself in this way; and till now it never had occurred to her to think or ask herself whether there was

———“In human form that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth,
That could, with cunning, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet *Jeanie's* unsuspecting youth?”

for guile had never yet leaped the pale of innocence by which she was enclosed around.

On reaching home, they found Mrs Skeldrin at the door, ready to welcome Jeanie's return with smiles of joy; but the gladness which overspread her countenance was quickly displaced by the shadow of gloom which came over her, on beholding the pale face and downcast look of her daughter, as, scarcely uttering a word of recognition, she entered the house, followed by her father looking excessively glum.

“I hope nothing serious has happened?” said Mrs Skeldrin, looking somewhat timorously from one to the other; but the averted eyes and distressed look of Jeanie told that something had occurred which had troubled her greatly.

“Yes; this is a pretty job ye've made o' your fine braw doctor, and a' your orders!” at length stammered out Mr Skeldrin, looking very furiously at his wife while he spoke. “I saw what it would come to, though *other folk* would have it all their own way, without letting those who knew better say a word.”

“Bless me! what do you mean? Has anything happened to the doctor, or to Miss Golloch? or has anything else gone wrong with you?” inquired Mrs Skeldrin, with much anxiety.

“*Nothing but what I looked for!*” returned Mr Skeldrin. “This man that you put such confidence in, has just turned out the very vagabond that I expected! You would take none of my advice, and see what a mess *you have* landed us in! Here is the man that has been *pretending to be making love to Jeanie*, and promising

to marry her,—the moment she is out of his sight, he has begun tampering with his servant-maid, and, for anything I know, has promised marriage to her also; and now that the poor thing has seen that his attentions were occupied with Jeanie, she has run off to-night, and left a letter behind, saying as much as that she will never be seen again in life!”

“Good gracious!” returned Mrs Skeldrin, “and is this really possible? I see by your looks it is too true; but I never would have believed such a story, had I heard it otherwise, and, indeed, I think there must be some mistake about it yet.”

“I—don’t—believe it—either, mother,” rejoined Jeanie, with some difficulty of utterance; “I don’t believe it.”

“No, no, don’t believe it!” said her father, somewhat sulkily; “rather go away back again, and make an apology to him for what we’ve done; and tell him to get another servant, and carry on with her too, and that you’re ready to forgive whatever he does!”

“Hush! hush!” interposed Mrs Skeldrin. “If there has been anything wrong, it won’t make it better speaking to poor Jeanie so harshly. If the doctor has turned out as you say, she’ll see it sometime, without you telling it in that way. So be glad it’s no worse; and don’t aggravate her, poor lassie; for she’s more grieved and sorry about it than you are.”

“So she may,” returned Mr Skeldrin, a little milder; “but it’s not her I blame so much as *them* that put her past the match I looked out for her. Had she done as *I* wanted, she would have had nothing of this kind to grieve her! Mr Gobbler’s a decent, worthy man, though he has less to say, and could not shove his nose so far in as this deceitful blackguard; but it would have been telling all of you, that my advice had been taken. I fancy ye would all be glad to take it *now*; but I’m afraid it’s too late for *that*, after Mr Gobbler has been so ill-used by both of *you*.”

"To tell you the truth, guidman," returned Mrs Skeldrin, a little piqued at these insinuations, "I think it would have been as bad at least had Jeanie done as you say. Little as you think of Dr Golloch, and for all you say he has done, I think twenty times more of him yet than of that down-looking farmer fellow you speak of."

"'Down-looking' here, or 'down-looking' there," returned Mr Skeldrin, "if I once can persuade him to come back among us, in his own old friendly way again, you'll see who will dare try to turn him adrift then. I was very stupid to listen to anybody's nonsense; but I think you've made quite plenty of *your* endeavours this time to keep ye from interfering with anything of the kind for a long time to come."

"O yes; of course, I get the blame of all that takes place," replied Mrs Skeldrin, with uncommon resignation; "but I am far mistaken if your way would have been any better, had you got it. But though *some people* take delight in saying what hurts the poor thing's feelings after she has had quite enough to vex her, *I'll* say nothing to distress and grieve her, at any rate." So saying, she went off with Jeanie into another room, and left him to reflect on his harshness, and console himself for it the best way he could, either by making up his mind that he had acted rightly, or by regretting his words, as might suit his fancy.

CHAPTER XVII.

Behold the grave official, stern and calm,
And hardened to his duty, all unmoved
By tales of misery or woe that reach his ear,
When in the breach they've made, Justice demands
His entrance indispensable.

IMMEDIATELY after the departure of Mr and Miss Skeldrin, Dr Golloch ordered Willie to put his horse in the stable, and then despatched him to Mrs Curmuddie's, to inquire whether her daughter had been there in the course of the evening, or if her mother knew where she was; but, as things stood, the doctor said nothing to him about the letter that had been left. Willie did as desired, but returned in a short time, with the intelligence that the girl had not been at her mother's that day, and that her mother knew nothing of her; but had sent a message, pleading and hoping that, as Katie was young and thoughtless, the doctor would not be too hard on her, if she had gone out a few minutes to speak to a friend.

Willie was then given an idea of the occurrence, and interrogated as to what time he had gone down to his mother's, and whether he had observed anything remarkable in the girl's behaviour, or noticed her doing anything unusual, or remembered anything particular she had said to him before he left.

Willie looked a little confused, and seemed put about by the questions, and unwilling or unable to reply to them; but he got out his answers distinctly enough to the effect, that he had "thocht her a *wee* queerer an different wi' him for a whylie;" that she had been "in

an unco fyke but and ben, and no sayin' muckle a' afternoon;" that he "thocht she pat aff a guid bit sortin' her head and dressin' hersel'"; that "the maist she said, was wonderin' what kind o' mistress the new leddy wad mak;" and that she had told him "he had plenty o' time tae gae tae his mother's," when he had been hinting doubts on that point, previous to starting a little before dark.

All this was fully as unfavourable as the doctor had feared; for he had not been entirely without hope of ascertaining something or other about her from her mother, which was now dispelled; and this, associated with Willie's ill-boding replies, gave the affair a more mysterious aspect.

Miss Golloch had, from the time of Miss Skeldrin's departure, sat with her forehead leaning on her hand, in a silent, passive, and thoughtful mood, the more distressed as her sad feelings were pent-up and restrained. When Willie's examination was concluded, her

"Softer soul in woe dissolved aloud,"

and she retired to the solitude of her own room.

As matters now stood, what was to be done? The doctor read the letter over again, and concluded that the best course he could adopt would be to put the affair into the hands of the police-officer, and accordingly set off to the station-house for that purpose.

Watty had been engaged the whole evening playing cards with the grave-digger; and at the time of the doctor's arrival, both were deeply absorbed in a game at "birkie," which had lasted nearly two hours. To do Watty justice, in minding his duty, and devoting his attention to business before pleasure, it is right to say, that the moment he heard the doctor wished to see him privately, he dropped his interesting and favourite amusement. Such a man could not allow himself to be degraded so far as to appear before the doctor *without being dressed* in his full official garb; so with all

possible speed, and to the wonder and admiration of Charlie Spades, he proceeded to envelope himself in his stiff-necked blue coat, into which he buttoned up with as much official dignity as he could command. Getting it adjusted to his mind, he looked in the glass, and seemed satisfied; and putting his baton carefully into his pocket, as he liked to have it always with him, he entered the apartment where the doctor was, with the most consequential manner he could muster.

On learning that the doctor actually wished his services in a case, as he had fondly anticipated, he instantly rushed back to the kitchen, and seizing his large slate, vanished with it under his arm without uttering a word. He closed the room-door carefully, and immediately proceeded to take down on his slate the precise time at which the doctor had called. For the purpose of ascertaining this correctly, he with great gravity began to consult his large, broad-faced watch; and after performing certain perplexing and intricate calculations, by shifting his thumb round the index, and making additions and deductions for the time it had been slow that day and fast the day before, he arrived at exactness sufficiently minute for his purpose, and got it recorded on the slate to his satisfaction, first checking his result by the doctor's watch. After Watty got over this first, and what he seemed to consider most important step, the doctor began to detail what had taken place. The amazed official listened with wide-open mouth and inquisitive stare to all that was said; and as the letter had been the sole cause of all the ado, it had necessarily to be referred to, which astonished him so much, as to draw forth a few inarticulate utterances of surprise. But merely alluding to the letter did not quite satisfy our friend, who deemed it absolutely necessary that he should see it, for the purpose of counting the words it contained. Though the doctor could see no reason for this, or any purpose to be served by it, yet, as Watty insisted that it was essentially

requisite, he was permitted to do so. After he had gone over the number from beginning to end, and done the same backwards, he made a noting on his slate as before, with the amount in words as well as in figures; the time it was found, as nearly as the doctor could recollect, being also set down with equal care. After getting through these manœuvres, he gave his opinion that it was "a most singular case a'thegither;" but he did not see how anything could be done that night, or that there was any need for attempting it, his reason for thinking so being, that if she had intended to make away with herself, she had had so long time to do it, either by drowning or otherwise, that there would be no chance of saving her, even supposing they knew where she had gone; and that if she had committed suicide, as he feared, it would be quite soon enough to find her in daylight, for all the advantage it was to be after her life was out. On the other hand, if nothing should turn out to be wrong, he judged that his efforts could be directed with greater success by waiting till morning, than they could possibly be in the darkness. He promised, at the same time, that he would perhaps give a look about the village; and if he saw or heard nothing, that he would proceed in search of her early on the following morning.

Knowing nothing else that he could do connected with the matter, the doctor took leave of the intelligent officer, who noted down the time of his departure to a moment, and then rejoined his wife and Charlie, who had been wondering very much what could be the meaning of the doctor's visit and lengthy interview.

Charlie's head travelled rather more rapidly, and altogether he was quite confounded at the remarkable narrative, and instantly volunteered to form one of the searching party in the morning. He declared, that rather than risk being prevented getting, he would go and make ready, by the light of his lantern, a "graft," *which he said* would be required the following day for

one of Lowrie Lingle the shoemaker's children, though, as he regrettingly said, he "almost grudged tae break yird for't, as it was sich a wee crater." Out of consideration for the family, however, who, he said, had been "guid customers," and some of whom he thought "micht be needin' a job o' the same kind sune," he would not disappoint them, but would get it ready somehow. He waited, notwithstanding, to hear Watty go over the details again, and did not carry into effect his first idea of digging by the light of the lantern, but decided on getting assistance, and rising to his task early in the morning.

He was so elated with the prospect of the expedition, that he could not settle to finish the broken-off game, although Watty remonstrated with him very severely for allowing an occurrence of the kind to put him about. He endeavoured by all means in his power to get him to renew it; but Charlie would not yield, so they bound themselves by agreement that their respective "hands" would be allowed to remain undisturbed, till an opportunity should arise for deciding the game.

Their amusement being thus suspended, Watty resolved upon taking a tour of inspection through the village to see how things were looking, and kindly granted permission to Charlie to accompany him, for the purpose of showing that worthy the excellence of his system of going about these difficult cases, and the scientific style he could manage them in without creating suspicion of being after anything extraordinary. In granting this unusual liberty, Charlie had to be fully impressed with the great personal favour he was having conferred on him, in being thus allowed to go side by side with the policeman, in his full confidence, and with the knowledge that he had, along with his baton, his pair of strongest handcuffs in his pocket, and his dark lantern under the flap of his coat, all ready to be brought *into action the moment they might be needed.*

Thus equipped, he made a short call at Mrs Curmuddie's, to give himself official satisfaction that the girl was not there, irrespective of the doctor's information. This proceeding raised the lady's ire very considerably, as Watty, being on duty, did not answer her numerous inquiries so particularly as she would have wished.

Finding that she was not there, Watty and his companion next went with great caution through the village; but though they listened as well as they could to hear what was the subject of conversation among all the small groups of loungers they passed on their way, and Watty, with a fearlessness peculiar to his profession, turned the full glare of his lantern on all the old women that came in his way, and subjected them to a close scrutiny, yet they neither found a person making any allusion, that could be considered as relating to the fugitive, nor any trace of herself prowling about. They, therefore, gave up the rigid search, and betook themselves to their respective homes, after Charlie had made his friend promise again very solemnly not to set out in the morning without him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Distress o' mind they've brocht to me,
Wi' a' their clitter-clatter;
But in this state I cannot be,
For I must know the matter;
When, woe be to them! if they've been
The cause o' bringing trouble;
For on their heads, for what they've done,
They will receive the double
Or mair some day.

"My certie! here's a speer, speerin' and-a-half," said Mrs Curmuddie to herself, after the policeman had taken his departure, without giving her any particular reason for making certain inquiries at her regarding her daughter. "I winna pit up wi' thae glowrin', hiddlin' loons comin' howkin' and pokin' after my dochter; I maun awa up mysel', and see what a' this racket an' on-gaun is aboot. They're no to come here an' speer after her that way, the same's she was an ill-daer."

She finished her sentence, made herself ready to take the road, and hurriedly set out for the doctor's, repeating over to herself what she intended to say to him, so as to keep her ideas alive in her recollection.

She reached the house, and after considering a moment whether to go to the front door or the kitchen one, as she had the doctor himself to deal with, she decided to take the former, both for the purpose of making him thoroughly aware of her independence, and the better showing the magnitude of the insult she had experienced. She then unhesitatingly applied four of her hard knuckles to the door so furiously that it almost staggered with

the shock, and both Miss Golloch and the doctor were considerably surprised at the unusual sound.

"Ou, my leddy, ye're there, are ye?" said Mrs Curmuddie, as Miss Golloch opened the door in answer to her summons. "I didna ken ye was hame, mem; an' I clean forgot to speer at the laddie whether ye was back or no. I've jist ta'en a stap up, to see what's the meanin' o' a' this racin' and rinnin' after my dochter. But if he's in his sel', I wad like as weel to see him; or maybe, if you've haen tae dae wi't, you'll can tell me what's the meanin' o't; for, to say the truth, I like nae sic snoakin' an' wark as has been gaun on the nicht about my lassie."

"Just step in here," said Miss Golloch, opening the door of a side room, "and I'll tell the doctor."

"O, ye're there tae, sir!" cried Mrs Curmuddie, as the doctor made his appearance in the lobby on hearing what was passing. "I've jist been tellin' the leddy here that I was wantin' to see"——

"Just come in here, my good woman," said the doctor, as he entered the side room.

"O, ye're unco kind," returned Mrs Curmuddie; "but there's nae use o' ye makin' ony kick-up aboot me; for I could say a' my say here, for that part o't; an' ye needna trouble yersel' wi' ony o' yer high-fleein' variorums wi' me. A' that I want to ken is, what my dochter's been after, that ye're makin' sic a speerin' and adae aboot her."

"I am very sorry, indeed, that it has been rendered necessary to do so," returned the doctor; "but you must not be alarmed, for it may turn out nothing after all."

"Guid keep me, sir!" said Mrs Curmuddie, somewhat startled; "if she's dune onything vrang, dinna dilly-dally, and gang round aboot the bus, but tell me what faut she's in, or what's vrang at ance, withoot ony hully-balloo aboot it."

"I'm sure I've no wish to keep you in any suspense,"

returned the doctor; "but all I know is, that she has left here; and I don't know either where she's gone to, or what has been her reason for going away."

"Losh-have-a-care-o'-me! this is a dreadful job as ever I heard," returned Mrs Curmuddie, getting a little excited. "An' hae ye nae notion i' the world whaur she's tae, or what's made her gang aff? I doot there's some jookerie-paukerie in't."

"I had no idea whatever," returned the doctor, "that she meant to do anything of the kind, till I learned that she was away."

"Are ye *sure* ye had nae quarrel or kick-up at a' wi' her, doctor?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie, looking as if she doubted what was said. "I'm sure she was aye a quiet lassie, an' ne'er said a cross word to me a' her life; and I dinna think she wad ever be itherwise at ony time. Ye maun hae been findin' faut wi' her, or daein' or sayin' something or ither that she's ta'en sae sair to heart she's no been able to thole't. I'm dootin' a wee ye're no a'thegither to wide the water wi'."

"I do assure you, there was nothing of the kind," returned the doctor. "I always found her what you say in every respect; and I never was more surprised in my life, than when I saw the—the—when I"—

"Ay, ay, man! ye loopie-loon ye, what's that ye're hankerin' and stoppin' at?" ejaculated Mrs Curmuddie, on observing the doctor hesitate. "I doot there's some whaup i' the rape. I dinna like that stoppin' an' stitterin' wark at a'. Jist tell the thing plain doun at ance; it surely canna mak it ony waur. But whate'er it is, I *maun* ken,—that's eneugh; and fient a stap I move till I hear't."

"Well, if you must know," returned the doctor, "I have no objections to telling you, except that, out of respect to your feelings, I would rather say nothing more till I see what happens."

"Dear me, man! I wonder to hear ye! Muckle you

care about my feelings, ye sleeky thoomart!" returned Mrs Curmuddie, very scornfully. "Tell me the thing at ance, an' tak chance o' my feelin's hurtin'; for I want nae mair o' yer deil's sympathy; an' I'm muckle mista'en, tho' ye hing yer faple, and look sae innicent-like, if there's no mair the matter than ye're willin' to say."

"I have no wish to keep *anything* a secret from you concerning your daughter's leaving my house," said the doctor, taking the letter from his pocket. "All I know is that she did go, and left this behind her, addressed to me; but I have not the slightest shade of idea what reason she could have for doing so."

"Oh, doctor! doctor!" she returned, "I hope ye hinna been takin' advantage o' my puir faitherless bairn. I wadna ta'en ye for sic a first-rate blackguard, or expectit this at yer hand. I ne'er thocht anything was vrang, tho' I heard baith gybes an' hints when the leddy was awa. But read owre the letter yoursel' to me, for I'm no weel used wi' thae things, and let me ken what she says; I can hear't a', whate'er it is."

The doctor proceeded to read the letter, to which Mrs Curmuddie listened with attention, and to all appearance was not much concerned; but she showed considerable emotion, burst into tears, and sobbed very loud, as the doctor read the sentence, "I hope God will forgive me, and have mercy on my soul," and ejaculated with some difficulty, "I hope He will! Puir woman! I never thocht it wad hae come to this wi' ye!" But she gradually recovered herself to a certain extent by the time the document was finished, the doctor having halted a moment when she broke out.

"Weel, doctor," she said, wiping her eyes with her apron, "if onything has come owre my dochter, I canna free ye; for it's a cruel blackguard action o' ye if ye've deceived the puir thing (an' there's little doot that ye've *gien her some encouragement or ither, or she wadna dune this*); but I'll leeve ye to a Higher Hand to be dealt

wi'. Whate'er ye've said tae my puir bairn, that's dang her tae desperation, ye ken best yersel'; but it's clear that it's been something tae dae wi' the young woman that's been fleein' up and doun wi' the leddy, yer sister there, that she's been sae ill aboot. I thocht my lassie wad haen the sense tae ken there's nae luck wi' folk carryin' on wi' them higher than themsels; but if ye hae deceeved her, ye've the mair tae answer for; tho' I thocht, frae the way she had been brocht up, she wad hae kenn'd better than aither tae hae haen onything tae dae wi' ye, or ta'en yer slicht sae sair tae heart."

"I assure you that you wrong me," said the doctor. "But I really cannot blame you; for, I confess, the circumstances are strong against me. Nevertheless, I excuse whatever you may say, trusting, though the hope is, I am sorry to think, but faint, that it may be proved otherwise. I suppose you are satisfied that this is hers," he continued, as he handed the letter to Mrs Curmuddie.

"To tell the truth, sir," replied Mrs Curmuddie, not altogether pleased to see the doctor, as she thought, questioning her daughter's capabilities as a writer, "I dinna pertend to muckle lair mysel; but my lassie got guid lairnin', an' could baith vrite and read weel, tho' I never expeckit, after a' I've spent on her, that she wad mak this use o' her edication. Tho' it's maybe a wee glee'd and reel-rall, it's baith weel and sensible written; and there's fient a doot but it's hers, puir woman!"

"I am really sorry, Mrs Curmuddie, that a circumstance so trying to your feelings should have taken place, and would have been so had I had nothing to do with it whatever," said the doctor; "but I hope you will not allow yourself to be too much overcome till the worst is known. It may be that nothing has come over her, though we are always inclined to fear the worst when anything goes wrong."

"Weel, sir, I houp ye're laird o' yer word, that's a'," returned Mrs Curmuddie, drying her eyes with her

apron. "I'll keep up my heart as weel's I can, tho' it'll be nae easy job; and if ye hear ony tell o' the puir thing, ye'll send me word, for I'll be in perfet het water or I ken what's ta'en place."

"You may rest assured, Mrs Curmuddie," returned the doctor, "that I will take the earliest opportunity of acquainting you the moment I learn anything tending to throw light on this singular proceeding; and if anything come to your ears, be sure that you let me know."

"O yes, I'll dae that, sir. She'll surely aither cast up hersel', or something be heard o' her sune. At ony rate, I fancy ou can mak naething mair o't the noo," said Mrs Curmuddie, as she, still sobbing a little, turned to leave the room.

"You'll be nothing the worse of a glass of wine before you go," said the doctor, making a sign to his sister, which was quickly followed by its being produced; and after modestly partaking thereof, Mrs Curmuddie went on her way, with a slow pace and sorrowful mind, notwithstanding the comparatively easy view she had taken of the occurrence, and the apparent coolness with which she had borne up under the same.

CHAPTER XIX.

With hearts unfeeling as the sod,
 'Neath which they soon must lie,
Mark how unfeelingly they trod,
 And carelessly passed by.
No thoughts possessed them, but to lay
The dead in silence in the clay—
 Regrets or sadness, none!
These men of death are all unmoved,
Though those they hated, those they loved,
 Are moulded into one.

THAT vigilant official, Watty Baton, was out of bed, and had his breakfast bolted a good while earlier than his usual, that morning the search for the missing girl was to be set about in earnest. Being a man of his word, in this case at least, he proceeded direct to the house of his friend Charlie, at the door of which he stopped a short time, to listen to the rather attractive hubbub and on-going that was passing within. The loud noises and crashing that seemed to proceed from the upsetting of chairs and tables, intermixed with the lively accompaniment of children shrieking, howling, crying, singing, whistling, and leaping, made him wonder very much. To satisfy himself as to what could be the reason of such extraordinary uproar in the establishment, he entered with the slow, cautious step of the police race, his head and body being extended forward as far as he could shove them, to get a look of what those within were about before letting himself be seen.

He found that the noise was occasioned by the young Spades, who were just getting astir for the day, and busy dancing half-naked through the house, indulging

in every possible freak, to the great annoyance and hindrance of their mother, who could not get them to remain at rest, although she was exercising her utmost efforts and strength in scolding and beating them. But the moment the glazed hat of the policeman caught their sight, their mirth and on-going were speedily abandoned, and they disappeared in flocks under beds and other places, where they remained out of the sight and reach of the dreaded visitor.

"Ay, losh! ye may weel rin an' keep oot the gaet," cried Mrs Spades, as her progeny vanished from her sight. "I tauld ye he wad come an' tak ye awa; an' nae matter tho' he had every cloot o' ye; for," she continued, addressing Watty, "I daresay there's no sich anither pack o' young deevils for mischief in the hale toun."

"Ay, if they're bad boys, I'll tak them a' awa," said Watty, drawing himself up to his full height, speaking in his highest tone, and avoiding all appearance of laughing; for he knew the juveniles were terrified for him, and he did not care about letting them have a chance of seeing he was jesting.

"Ony word o' the hizzie yet?" carelessly inquired Mrs Spades. "*Will* she be dead?"

Watty, with much dignity, laconically replied, "We'll see aboot it."

"He's down in the yard himsel'," continued Mrs Spades, apparently not considering the reply unsatisfactory; "but if ye'll be sated, I'll rin an' tell him ye're here."

"O, ye needna gie yersel' that fash ava," said Watty. "I'll tak a stap across mysel', and see what he's aboot."

A short time found him in the churchyard, and a moment after his entrance, Charlie's head was seen peering above a tombstone, and grinning a welcome recognition as it traversed its half-circle at its usual rate.

"I daresay this is the first time ever I saw you in my

bed-room at sic a early hour," said Charlie, as his friend made his way over the graves towards him. "If it hadna been I expeckit ye, I wad thocht it was a job, when I heard the auld yett squeakin'. I'm jist aboot ready to gae wi' ye; for we've got this bit placie made wonderfu' snug. Neddy here's jist giein't a bit clap on the sides wi' the back o' his shool, to mak it look dacent; and if I had thir pieces o' auld coffins and thae shackle banes an' girnin' heads pat oot o' sicht, we'll can be gaun; but ye see we dinna like a'thegither to be hurtin' the folk's feelin's, wi' haein' thir things lyin' aboot."

Having given this explanation as to why he was taking such pains to secure the fragments of mortality to which he had been alluding, he proceeded to cover them up with some grass or straw, which was lying about; while Neddy, resting on his shovel, smiled very good-naturedly, and blew his nose with his fingers, to testify his approval of Charlie's respect for the feelings of his neighbours.

"So, if I'm no back in time, then, see that ye're ready at hand," said Charlie to his companion, after he had got everything put right to his mind, and had begun to clean his hands by first rubbing them on the grass, and then giving them a wipe on his trousers.

"That's—like—if your—no hame, like," replied Neddy, after a little consideration, "I'm—to—be—here, like—I oonderstand."

"Jist that, man, jist that," said Charlie. "If I'm no hame in time, ye'll see to pittin' in the mools, an' I'll mak ye sure o' saxpence an' a dram for yer trouble, at ony rate. But ye ken," he added, grinning to Watty, "there 'ill no be an unco lot gaun aff this bit jobbie; but we'll maybe hae a *better ane sune*."

"Ah! ye duggies!" said Watty, winking his eye, and giving a very knowing grin in return, "if *it's* to be dune at the doctor's expense, it'll dae!"

"That's—like—I get—saxpence an' a—dram—like,

at ony—rate—like—I oonderstand,” said Neddy, replying to Charlie’s remarks in the same lively strain as before.

Charlie satisfied him again in the same way as previously, that what he did “oonderstand” was right, when Neddy, in his own way, made it understood that he promised faithfully to comply, and fill the office of deputy to the best of his ability, if Charlie should be absent at the time of the funeral. The two then retraced their steps, Charlie shouting back as he shut the gate, to warn Neddy to be sure not to leave it open when he came out, for fear of the minister’s sheep getting away, and the part of his reply which they heard before getting out of hearing was,—

“That’s—like—I’m—to—keep—the yett—shut—like—I”——

Charlie said he had to take a mouthful of something or other before setting out, so they went straight to his house, in which the howling and uproar seemed to be going on as briskly as ever, though Watty had given the performers such a fright on his first visit.

“Has Providence sent onything else our way this mornin’, Ma-ry?” inquired Charlie, the moment he got within the door.

“No; there’s been nae ane here this mornin’, excep’ yer freend there,” returned his wife. “But I daresay tho’ ye had a’ the folk i’ the Brummel corps, and yersel’ among them, ye wadna be pleasured; for I ne’er see ye that, come what likes.”

“I dinna see what things is to come tae, if that’s to be the way o’t,” returned Charlie. “Is my parritch ready?”

“Parritch! losh! ye ken weel enough, Charlie, there’s no a spoonfu’ o’ meal within the door, at least no hardly what wad mak a crowdie breakfast for the blackie there; and the weans hae ta’en a’ I’ve made.”

“Lord save the woman! ye ken I maun hae something to eat,” said Charlie. “Ye’ve surely a bite o’ae

thing or anither tae gie me. My wame's rumlin' like the clods on a coffin-lid."

"There's, I daresay, as muckle meal in the corner o' the pock yet as mak a bit dreepin' o' brose; but ye'll see if ye look it oot," returned his wife, very carelessly.

"I fancy sae!" said Charlie, with a tone of resigned despair; while he looked to Watty, as if inquiring whether he coveted Mrs Spades.

"Ye ken I hae naething tae gie ye, guidman," returned Mrs Spades, trying to look very pitifully; "tho' ye'll maybe get a moolin' o' bannock lyin' about. But there's the tea-pat, wi' my bit drib o' tea in't," she continued, observing that he noticed it in its hiding-place behind a peat.

"Ay! tea! ye wadna hae that unless ye had something till't," said Charlie, a faint ray of delight stealing slowly o'er his face. "I dinna mind *muckle* for that watery trash; but I'll gie a bit keek, and see what's here." So saying, he proceeded to open a press, and carefully scrutinize the contents,—the peculiarity in his top-storey enabling his eye to run along the shelves and ascertain what was on them with great rapidity. After inspecting two or three dishes, which, from his look and the disdainful way they were replaced, did not seem to contain much to suit his taste, he stammered upon one that appeared to possess greater recommendation than its companions, and he declared that he would "hae some o' it an' a piece bannock, at ony rate."

"There's baker's bread up i' my mother's bed-fit, faither," cried one of the urchins, who had been watching his proceedings.

"Ay, faith! I thoct she wad hae some o't," said Charlie grinning, and making towards the place indicated; while his wife administered a sharp rap over the knuckles to the "yatterin' brat" that had revealed her secret.

"See an' no devour't a' then, ye greedy gullainger

ye!" cried Mrs Spades, as Charlie brought the loaf out of its retreat.

Without making any rash promises on the subject, Charlie put the bread under his left arm, and seated himself on his eating-chair, as he always required to stop his head by leaning it against the side of the jamb when engaged in the necessary occupation of taking his food. He then commenced tearing the bread with his fingers, and supping from the dish; while his children formed round him, tugging and jostling one another to get as near their prey as possible.

"You'll tak a 'treckle-piece' tae, Watty, I fancy?" said Charlie, after he had bolted a mouthful or two; "but clash yersel' down on a sate, and mak yersel' comfortable."

Watty signifying that he had no objections to do as requested, Charlie tore off one of the crusts, and picked it down to a better level, distributing what he took off among the children, who clutched what he held out like a brood of young hawks. He then poured a liberal stream of the other article over it; and as he did so, he kicked the children out of his way for passing their fingers through the treacle as it ran from the dish. Mrs Spades stood looking on in silent anguish, as this delicious mess was handed to Watty.

After Watty had finished his crust, and Charlie had devoured all he was able to take, they set out on their expedition, Watty, with great generosity and ostentation, bestowing a halfpenny on the youngest child before leaving, as a recompense for what he had eaten and deprived the family of, telling the mother and father separately that he had done so, to prevent the possibility of his kindness passing unknown.

Watty first made a run in to Mr Tawse, to get a certain entry, setting forth the time of his commencing duty for the day, noted in his pocket memorandum-book, and certified by that gentleman; after which they proceeded to the doctor's, for the purpose of getting

Willie Artichoke with them, as Watty wished to be doubly sure of the identity, though he knew the girl quite well himself. But he considered it necessary, in such an important case as this, to make some show of formality about it, though, independent of Watty's requiring him to go, Willie had been very anxious to do so himself, for his own satisfaction.

Not caring to face Mrs Curmuddie a second time himself, Watty desired Willie to give her a call, to learn whether she had heard anything; while he and Charlie, by a judicious arrangement, waited the result a short way off, not to be shocking her with a sight of the whole three. Willie returned very soon with no new tidings, when a council of war was held; and Watty being of opinion that drowning would be the most likely course she would have taken to end her existence, at his suggestion they proceeded direct to the "Doukin'-Hole," a deep pool in the river that ran past the village. Watty preceding, they reached the place, went cautiously forward, and peered carefully into it as far as they could see. A drag, which Watty had borrowed for the purpose, was then drawn two or three times through it by himself, when he decided that she was not there. Charlie hearing this, immediately declared that from the first he had never thought she would go there to drown herself, especially when she could get it done much more comfortably and effectually at the "Old Quarry-Hole," which he said was well filled with water at the time. Watty did not altogether agree with this, his opinion being that if she had felt very determined to drown herself, she could have done it where they were quite well, as he judged she would not think of going so far as the Quarry-Hole, when the Doukin'-Hole was equally convenient. However, although it *was* Charlie's proposition, he actually expressed perfect willingness to try it too, before searching the woods, as he had resolved to make every possible exertion for Katie's discovery.

Thoroughly satisfied that they had done all they could there, they left the river, and soon arrived in sight of the old quarry. As the distant view of it diminished, Watty's experienced eye detected something on the surface of the water, which he thought very like a body, and pointed it out to his two companions. Charlie steadied his head with both hands, to get a more distinct look at the object referred to, and agreed with Watty that it was something uncommonly like what they were in search of. Willie being of the same mind, they all with one consent set off at their fastest, each striving to get down soonest, so that he might be able to boast of having been the first to ascertain the true fate of her they were in quest of. Though Charlie exerted himself to the utmost, and his long legs carried him over the ground very rapidly, yet Willie, being the youngest and swiftest, quite outstripped both him and Watty, and dashed on a-head of them. But on getting near the water, he suddenly stopped with a very disappointed look; for he found what had excited their expectations, and caused them to run, was nothing more than an old tree-root sticking out of the water. This result was a severe shock to Watty's acuteness and skill, and he felt desperately chagrined, and vented his disappointment in sundry smothered grumbings; while Charlie declared, by everything wherewith he could strengthen his assertion, that "the thing still appear'd sae like, that he could hardly believe his een that it was only a tree;" and this consoled Watty a little, though it did not quite eradicate his distress.

While examining the ground around the edge of the water, at the side from which the girl would in all probability have approached, had she proceeded to it straight from the village, they came upon some marks, which they all felt assured had been made by human feet. As the earth was somewhat dry, they were not distinct; yet Charlie was so well satisfied with them, that he loudly offered to risk ever so many thousands of

pounds that they would find her there. While Charlie was wagering, and Watty adjusting the drag, Willie, who had been looking pretty closely into the supposed footprints, volunteered to go down into the water himself, and explore the bottom, to make certain whether she was there or not. Without more ado, he then began to rid himself of his apparel, to carry his intention into effect.

Watty got alarmed at this bold step proposed by Willie, and was rather inclined not to allow him, though assured by the swimmer himself that there was not the least risk, as he had often been through far worse places for the fun of going. This statement did not thoroughly satisfy the cautious officer; but being backed by Charlie, who protested that Willie could "soom like a sweetie," Watty got quite convinced that Willie's aquatic acquirements were of such a high-class nature, that no reasonable grounds existed for interfering with him in what he proposed to do. That the swimmer's abilities had not been over-rated, was soon made apparent; for Willie threw himself right into the water, and paddled about with his head under the surface, to all appearance as much at his ease as a duck searching for minnows. After going on in this way a considerable time, he raised himself up, for the purpose, as Charlie explained, of "takin' a big mouthfu' o' wind," and then immediately disappeared down below. He remained out of their sight what appeared to be such a length of time, that even Charlie became a little uneasy at his absence, and Watty began to hint that he would have taken cramp and got drowned; but while discussing the reason, he re-appeared on the surface, shook the water from his eyes like a spaniel, and came ashore with the tidings that he could see nothing of her.

"What the deevil are we tae dae next then, Mr Baton?" inquired Charlie, looking rather sorry at hearing this result. "Gad! I thocht we wad hae gotten her afore this."

"We maun jist gie the trees in the Corbies' Plantin' a bit keek, I fancy," replied Watty. "It's perfet likely she may be hingin' there by the neck. We'll manage her far easier there, than grapin' aboot thir holes and places for her."

"I dinna think she wad be ane o' the kind tae dae that," returned Charlie; "no tae say that she wadna mak a guid substantial swing; but it's my thocht she'll raither hae nappit a bottle o' ackey-forty, or some o' the asnick or ither pushen that wad be lyin' aboot whaur she cam frae, an' hae cruppin' awa oot o' sicht in some quiet corner, an' ta'en't there as plesant's ye like."

"There's some truth in what ye say, Charlie," returned Watty; "but we canna err in giein' the trees a look in the by-gaun, that's *my* thocht."

"If I hadna ettled we wad hae haen her a' richt by the neck by this time," returned Charlie, somewhat disheartened-looking, "I dinna ken if I wad hae come; but I winna be hennin' noo;—so ye can gae whaur ye like."

Watty was a little distressed at the first part of this sentence, as he would have been sorry to lose Charlie's services in the wood, knowing he could scan four or five times more trees than any other man in the parish; but hearing that he was still determined to stick by him, he bundled up the dragging apparatus with great alacrity, and Willie having resumed his coverings, the party set out to examine the Corbies' Wood.

CHAPTER XX.

Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate.

Longfellow.

STEERING their way through the fields towards the spot they had fixed on as the scene of the further prosecution of their arduous task, our friends kept on a short time at a sedate pace, and nearly dead silent. Watty's expectations were somewhat shaken, and Charlie had lost heart a little; while Willie was not in the mood to enter into conversation with his two hardened matter-of-fact companions. Before them in the distance lay the Corbies' Wood, a dark, dense expanse of trees; and here and there a straggling individual was seen engaged in the occupation of ploughing, herding, or other pursuit connected with farming employment.

"What dae ye say, a'tho' we gie some o' thae folk a bit roar in the by-gaun, an' see if they can pit us on the scent?" said Charlie. "They'll aye can say if they've seen onything o' onybody like her."

"If it was only tae them we had tae look for hearin' tell o' onything, I'm thinkin' they wad mak but a puir job o't," replied Watty. "But I was thinkin' mysel' o' giein' a bit speer, in a kind o' canny, overlie sort o' way—the way hiz folk manages thae things. I mean, I was ettlin' tae dae that afore ye spoke. But what wad *you* be for sayin', if ye had yer ain way o't?"

"It maks nae difference tae me in the world, man—nae odds ava!" said Charlie, feeling from Watty's tone that he had been encroaching on the officer's special

prerogative. "I was only askin' what *you* thocht o't, that's a'."

"The like o' me kens fine oursel's hoo tae dae," said the jealous Watty. "Jist tak yer time, and ye'll see me open this chield's een a wee bit."

The "child" he spoke of came along a field adjoining to where they were, vociferously shouting a dozen different directions to the horses he was guiding over the furrows. To the uninitiated, these instructions would have been a most unintelligible task to comprehend; but he seemed quite at home in his vocabulary, and the horses to all appearance either understood it wholly, and were obeying, or were paying no attention to the gruff, harsh yellings of their driver, for they approached seemingly at their ease.

"Anything strange or queer hereabouts the day, then?" inquired Watty, as the roarer came alongside.

"Wo-back, Dick! wo, Bauldy, wo!" cried the ploughman; and when the horses stopped, he turned round, and loudly shouted, "What was't?"

"Anything aff the or'nar' hereawa the day?" inquired Watty again.

"Tak yer time, nae; let me see," said the knight of the clods, looking as if taken aback a little. "There's been naething I mind o' that you're like tae heed aboot."

"It's me judges o' that," returned Watty. "I was askin' ye if there was onything oot o' the way ta'en place hereawa."

"Tak yer time, nae," said our friend of the plough, evidently trying to bring his recollecting powers to a focus. "No, man; I mind naething, excep' a sow o' ours dee'd this mornin', and the like o' that wadna need tae be happenin' every day. It's the first time I ever kenn'd o't, and I'm no heedin' tho' I ne'er leeve tae see the like o't again, that's mair!"

"They're like the cuddies them—gey stiff senans in their necks," remarked Charlie; while Watty replied to

the man on the other side of the hedge, "It wasna the like o' that I meant; but I fancy there's naething else, or ye wad mind o't?"

"No; dod, if I ken ocht else," replied the agriculturist. "What was ye ettlin', aye?"

"Ou, jist onything ye'd heard o'," said the sly officer. "We was only passin';—guid-day."

"Wo-back, Dick! lie, Bauldy, wo!" cried the ploughman, setting his team in motion, and staring after the trio as they went on their way.

"It disna dae, ye see, tae gie thae fallows a' their ain way," said Watty to his companions as they advanced.

"Maybe it disna," said Charlie; but if ye had speer'd about the lassie, instead o' askin' overlie, it wad been as weel, tae my thinkin'. But ye pit yer questions very droll, and whyles come at the thing gey sly tae, I daresay."

The first part of this sentence did not please Watty well, as it had seemingly not entered his mind to put questions pointedly, that being out of his usual practice; but before he had expressed displeasure at it, the latter part of Charlie's speech quite softened him down.

"Yes, man, yes," said Watty, a little flattered; "I'll let ye see me tairge this callant on't tae. Hey! laddie!" he cried to an urchin herding cattle near at hand. "Come 'ere, my man!"

The boy approached, staring in the air, and stammered five or six times, through running his feet in the ground when not looking where he was stepping.

"Onybody gaun hereawa this forenoon, my mannie?" asked Watty, speaking in a very patronizing tone.

"Was't mans, or chaps, or laddies, or lassies, or women, or leddies, or auld wives? or what kind was ye seekin'?" inquired the boy, with a very communicative expression in his face.

"Hiv ye seen ony women folk paradin' aboot hereawa?" said Watty. "Ye're a gey auld-farrant chappie."

"Faith hae I, tho'—faigs hae I!" he returned.

"Back, Spattey," he continued, as he stoned a cow that was straying beyond the limits of her boundary; "gae back, Spattey."

"Where was she?" asked Watty; "and what like was she?" inquired Charlie at the same moment, while the reply was anxiously awaited by Willie.

"Which o' them?" said the youth, looking from one to other of his interrogators.

"What like war them ye've seen?" inquired Watty. "Tell's that, like a man."

"I didna see baith their faces," returned the youngster; "but ane o' them was a woman, wi' twa bairns, gaun owre wi' that man's parritch in the park there; and the tither ane was a sauld wife carryin' a basket—awfu' like's she had been nappin' something."

"Faith! but that'll no fit us, tho'," said Watty; "but ye're a stuffie bit laddie. We'll be gaun, Charlie."

They went on, and soon drew near the gloomy, dark, uninviting expanse of surly distorted firs that formed the Corbies' Plantation, beside the edge of which one or two magpies arose, and flew off into its recesses. These birds attracted the notice of Charlie, as well as that of the officer.

"What dae ye think o' thae boys, Watty?" said Charlie, pointing to the birds as they rose with their stealthy suspicious flight. "Thae looks weel. What is't the poem about them says again?—

'Ane's joy,
Twa's grief;
Three's a marriage,
Four's death!'

The full number's there at a' events, if no mair!"

"The beasts is weel enough," returned Watty; "but a cord owre mony's as bad's ane owre few; "and there's mair nor the allooance o' them there, at ony rate. We'll stap along the length o' the sawpit there," he continued, *inclining his head* in the direction a sound was coming

from, "and see if the men workin' in't hae ony tidin's tae gie us."

The saw was heard grating very loudly, and a strong smell of tobacco-smoke was drifting down the light breeze as they advanced. They drew up alongside where the sawyers were at work unobserved by them, as the upper half of the topmost man was all that could be seen over the enclosure.

"It's a fine, bonny day this!" said Watty, calling out to the man who was thus partly visible.

"Haud on, Soly! haud on a second or twa," cried the individual addressed, speaking to his companion below.

The saw stopped, and Soly was heard asking gruffly what was the meaning of the interruption.

Watty reiterated his remark about the day, and the individual leaning on the noisy implement coincided with him.

"What's they sayin'?" inquired Soly from below. "Wha is't?"

"They're jist some folk speakin' i' the by-gaun," said the reclining woodman. "What're ye sae surly for?"

Watty next began to tell what he was in quest of, when the individual below hearing something strange was passing, appeared aloft beside his comrade, with his head muffled up in crape, like a masked executioner, and so thickly coated with sawdust, as almost to obstruct his seeing.

Soly undid his view-excluding head-wrapper, and displayed a gruff, ill-natured, fierce, discontented face, rendered doubly so from all the teeth in the upper jaw being out, except a long, sharp, solitary one sticking in the middle, which fitted into a space in the row below that suited the size of it.

The sawyers had seen no person suiting the description; but the first one offered to give them a hand to search the wood, which Soly objected to, and desired

him to mind his saw. On this, quarters beside the prince of darkness were gratuitously allotted to Soly by his friend, with copious instructions for the making of his passage to the regions inhabited by that august personage. Soly, in turn, recommended a journey to the same district, with further additions not over complimentary either to his own associate or to Watty.

The first referred to of this happy pair intimated that he had finished his last "pipefu'," and asked our friends with a wink whether they had any tobacco; and a small piece being handed up, and transferred to Soly, he put it into his mouth, with a remark which was meant to imply that he would go through the wood a short way, and give them his assistance also.

The three then climbed over into the sawpit, and joined Soly and his more agreeable mate. The latter began to fasten on a pair of delicate-looking shoes, to give better protection to his feet than was afforded by the stockings, through which the wearer's toes all peered as separately and distinctly as if they had been in gloves with the halves of the fingers cut from them. This done, they dispersed, and commenced their scramble through the wood.

After a fruitless search, they reached the extremity of it, and assembled in a group, all except Charlie, who had emerged at the outer side, apart from the others, and was standing with his attention earnestly rivetted on the ground.

Charlie's concerned manner drew the attention of the others to him; and Watty, fancying it would be something uncommonly attractive, ran up to where he was.

"What's this, Charlie? What're ye lookin' at?" asked Watty, staring inquiringly around.

"I was lookin' at that," said Charlie, pointing to the grass as he spoke.

"What is't, man?" said Watty. "Is't a athert, or what? for I see naething."

"It's jist that swaird o' bonny divots," said Charlie, drawing imaginary lines with his hand to describe the extent of the grass his professional mind was so much pleased with.

"Hoo! is that a'?" said Watty. "I fancy ye've seen naething o' her among the trees aither, like the rest o' us?"

"No me!" replied Charlie, with a very disheartened accent, "no me! What are we to dae noo?"

"Hame, and see if they've heard onything there," said Watty; "that's a' we can dae the day noo, sae far as I can see."

"She's maybe no sae far frae the door as this, for a' our bather," said Charlie; "but we'll ken what's what some day. Her puir mother 'ill jist hae to wear the bauchles o' affliction the easiest way they'll fit," he added, attempting to speak, as he thought, very feelingly.

"Weel, I'm obleeg'd tae ye," said Watty, turning to the two auxiliaries. "Ye ken wha I am, I fancy; so if ye hear or see onything o' her, ye'll let me get word o't;—sae I'll bid ye guid-day."

Soly paid no attention, but the other responded, and they parted from their woodland friends.

Retracing their steps by a different route, they arrived in the neighbourhood of Bramble-Green, and passed near the churchyard on their way.

Charlie wanted to go in, to see what had been done there in his absence; but Watty would not go with him, and objected to waiting till he went. Rather reluctantly, the officer gave him a hoist up on the wall that surrounded the burial-ground, to gratify him with a sight of the place of repose of Lowrie Lingle's child; and when he had held him up a very short time, he, in a tone of lost patience, inquired if all was right, and whether Charlie intended to stare all day.

Charlie was let down on his feet again, and said, "There's a divot on, I see;" but he did not seem perfectly pleased.

"I'll look in, and ask Neddy how he's come on, I think," said Charlie, as they approached the place where the person he spoke of lived.

"Then I'll jist haud hame," said Watty. "Guid-day the noo."

"Aweel, whaun 'ill I see ye again?" said Charlie. "Maybe I'll be down the nicht, but we'll see."

Charlie rapped on the window of Neddy's abode, and called out to ascertain whether he was within. Being informed he was, by a signal from some one inside, Charlie opened the door.

"Our chap's been in an awfu' bricht key the day," said Neddy's landlady, as Charlie entered. "There's been nae doin' wi' him at a', he's been sae big! Here he is, Charlie," she continued, pointing to Neddy; "and he's dune naething but sit there smudgin' and lauchin' a' afternoon."

Neddy appeared to be very happy indeed. He sat with one leg lifted over the other, and holding the upper one in position, with his hands clasped across it, laughing all the time so much delighted as to be unable to speak, but the expression of his face showed him to be expecting and ready for some remarks of a complimentary nature.

"I see ye've got it happit wonderfu' snug," said Charlie. "Man, we've haen a puir day o't, gaun gapin' and glowrin' up and down, and a' for naething! Did ye manage a' richt, nae?"

"Neddy's an awfu' chap," said the landlady. "When he tak a thing by the hand, he's a fair deather a'thegither!"

This made Neddy "smudge," as his landlady termed it, like to burst his face. But it seemed a prolusion to his speech, as he immediately got out, illustrative of his determined spirit, "No like's—I wad—negleck—the—thing like; that's like—whan I—taen'd—in—hand—*like—ye* oonderstand."

"Weel, ye'll never rue bein' attentive," said Charlie.

"I'll settle wi' ye whanever I can. Ye ken Lowrie's gey dreigh; an' I'll maybe jist hae tae tak jobs in solin' or tackets or tae-pieces for't; but you're sure o' what I promis'd you at ony rate, as soon's I can, come *his* payment whan and hoo it likes."

Neddy's laugh showed he placed every reliance on the honourable nature of Charlie's promise; and Mrs Mudgeekie confirmed this, by saying she "wished she was as sure o' a hunder an' fifty pound."

"I'll likely look up after, and see what kind o' job ye've made," said Charlie, as he turned to leave; "but I'll gang hame first, and see what's what."

CHAPTER XXI.

To buy his favour, I intend this friendship,
If he will take it.

Merchant of Venice.

LIKE every occurrence that happens in a country place, the disappearance of Katie Curmuddie from the doctor's soon became known throughout the village. As is usual, when anything out of the ordinary course takes place, almost every one had a variation of the particulars, and many and strange were the different rumours. Some, according to their own accounts, were quite prepared for what had happened, and pretended not to be astonished in the least at it. This arose from the doctor's having been, as they considered, from the first on terms of too great familiarity with the servant girl, and thereby induced her to believe he intended to marry her. It was, therefore, to this familiarity that the proceeding was attributed; and from the most generally-accepted versions of the story, it was thought that these attentions had been on the increase during the absence of Miss Skeldrin with Miss Golloch, and that some sudden change to coldness on his part before their return had driven Katie to the desperate state indicated in the letter. Though no traces of her fate had been found, and all searchers had failed to discover her, it was fully believed that she had perpetrated the rash act apparently contemplated when the letter was written.

Not one word whatever had been heard about her, except from Cockie Cheeper, the village fiddler, who gave out that, when on his way to play at a wedding on the night she left, he had seen her and a man

crossing one of the fields by a "near-hand cut." On interrogation, however, he admitted both that he had got "a dram or twa, and was a wee bit off them;" and also that he "couldna *exactly* say wha the man was, as it was a wee dark;" but that he was nevertheless "gey sure it was her, tho' he naither see'd her face, nor thoct wha she was at the time."

Cockie's statement was considered as too vague for much or any reliance to be placed on it, from sundry suspicions as to whether he could have been either capable of seeing much of one thing or other on the occasion he alluded to, or likely to notice what he might happen to see with anything like accuracy. It was not exactly doubted that he had seen some person or other at the place named by him; but as he had been labouring under several disadvantages, it was thought nothing but fair to consider him as having been mistaken, especially as the person he described as having seen with Katie could not be heard of, though one or two were found who admitted having crossed the said field accompanied as indicated, and seen Cockie by the way.

There were some, likewise, who considered Cockie's authority as indisputable, notwithstanding the few drams which he confessed having had, and the other things that were against him. These parties insisted that she had run off with a sweetheart, and would be heard of as a *Mrs* somebody or other from some distant part of the country, which was, on the whole, not an unreasonable supposition, had Cockie's evidence been true. But then, with whom had she gone? All the men who had been about the place at the time were there still; and besides, there was none among them, except Willie Artichoke, who had ever been thought on the look-out after her, or been laid to her charge by those who were judges in courting matters. But after allowing all this, and even that she *had* eloped, what would have been the reason of her leaving such a letter

to the doctor? *That* required to be explained; and going away with a man would not do it.

Both her mother and Mrs Artichoke were very wild at this latter supposition; for they had made sure, and been very happy, in the hope, that at a time not far distant some closer connection would originate between the families. Willie and Katie having been placed in such an advantageous position for rendering an occurrence of this kind so probable, and it being expected on both sides that it would so result, there was no wonder that the unlooked-for event threw the Artichoke family into nearly as much sorrow as it did her own.

We must now turn to Dr Golloch, and see how the occurrence affected him. From the first moment the event became known, half the people in the parish were up in arms against him, and declaring on all sides that they would never employ a man guilty of such doings as those laid to his charge, but would rather run the chance of getting themselves killed outright by applying to Dr Plyphleme.

Dr Golloch maintained his ignorance of anything on his part that could have been the cause of her conduct; which he protested himself unable to account for in any way, except by supposing she had either got out of her reason, or had been labouring under some strange delusion at the time. This opinion of the doctor's was no excuse; and those who were opposed to him, were headed by Mr Butterscales, who took the lead in turning the tide against him, by getting the services of Dr Plyphleme at the arrival of a two-volumed edition of a contribution towards the replenishing of the earth, with which Mrs Butterscales presented his family circle a day or two after the leaving of the servant had transpired. That interesting event put Mr Butterscales into such a state of excitement and joy, that he could hardly be dissuaded from carrying the two youthful squallers round to his shop for the purpose of getting them weighed. On doing this he was so thoroughly bent,

that although Dr Plyphleme put him past it at first, he attempted afterwards to bribe the nurse to let him get admittance with his largest scales, which he had mounted for the test, but he was again frustrated in his design.

Even in filling the place of the servant girl there was considerable difficulty experienced, not so much from aversion entertained by others to entering the situation, but because their parents were mostly all opposed to allowing their daughters to have any connection with an establishment which was now looked upon as being of a very questionable character. After much trouble and delay, one was at length fixed upon and appointed, in every person's opinion completely fitted for the duty. Her principal recommendation, in the eye of the public, was a peculiarity in her personal appearance, which rendered her anything but attractive. But, independent altogether of this, she was several years' sail on the shady side of the line, and one of those sterling garret coins who had resisted all the attempts ever made to induce her to jingle in concert with the matrimonial sovereign. From this alone, in the belief of many, she might with all safety have been depended upon as one thoroughly capable of withstanding everything she might have to encounter while sojourning in that habitation of danger.

While this outcry and feeling against the doctor were at their height, a considerable amount of sympathy was exhibited towards Miss Golloch, as it was just to be supposed she would be much hurt at the occurrence, and feel in a particularly awkward position in consequence of it. These evidences of good-feeling and friendship towards Miss Golloch, in themselves highly to be commended, and doubtless prized by herself, perhaps tended to make other attentions take root, and start up in quarters whence they were not expected to come.

This was shown in the case of the Misses Tawse,

who, with some of the more rigidly virtuous old maids of the parish, had, when the unlucky circumstance came to their ears, been very severely shocked at the idea of what was thought to have taken place in the doctor's house. This had hurt them so much, that they felt very unwilling even to pass the unhallowed spot; and when occasion unavoidably required them to do so, they had always taken the opposite side of the street, rather choosing to put up with wading through the dubs, and jumping over the mud-heaps, than pass too near, for fear of being contaminated. But their scruples had somehow worn off, and Miss Golloch began again to receive a friendly call now and then.

The sudden change which occurred in the conduct of the Misses Tawse in this respect, had nothing so very singular in it, as their previous behaviour might have given grounds for supposing. It was simply caused by the new turn the doctor's affairs had taken, making them think that more cheering prospects than they had for a long time calculated on were in store for them. The event, indeed, made them joy exceedingly, from many directly opposite motives, the chief of their raptures of delight on the subject being afforded by seeing the annoyance to which the doctor was subjected on the girl's singular departure.

When at length their father ascertained that the doctor's attentions at Thistle Ha' were suspended, with no prospect of their being renewed while things remained as they were, he immediately grasped at the enormities of which the doctor appeared guilty, and stripped them of the greater portion of their horror and bad aspect. A different light soon sprung up regarding them, and thinking it might tend to his own advantage, he commenced to exculpate the doctor, and also recommended the Misses to set about a reconciliation as early as possible, and advised what in his opinion was the most chaste and affable way of attaining it.

They had set about following this advice with such goodwill, that the breadth of the road, which at first had been allowed to separate them from the doctor's house in passing it, was soon narrowed by pretty broad stripes; and ere many passings-by had been made, they summoned courage to call for Miss Golloch, as already stated, and so gave her the benefit of their sympathies very often, along with others who were doing the like, from motives which they knew best themselves.

CHAPTER XXII.

It's happiness to hae a freend—
They're blessed wha can it tell :
But aft it proves the freend's a freend
Jist to befreend himsel'.

THE people at Thistle Ha' gradually recovered from their excitement; but the engagement with the doctor was, under the circumstances, considered quite broken off and at an end. Both Mrs Skeldrin and Jeanie entertained hopes that the occurrence, which had caused the unexpected estrangement, might yet appear in a different light, and the doctor be fully acquitted of every thing dishonourable, though indications of such a desirable result did not seem in any hurry to make their appearance. Jeanie and her mother were very anxious that these wishes should be displayed, and encouraged as much as possible; for both were sorry to learn the way in which the doctor was treated, as, however guilty he might be, nothing had been proved against him. Mrs Skeldrin in the course of time gathered courage to speak of this view of the matter to her husband, when he happened to be proposing to get Mr Gobbler reinstalled; but it put him into a mood neither of them had seen him in for long before, and produced such a furious squabble, that even Mrs Skeldrin was surprised, and admitted she had never encountered the like.

He gave them to understand distinctly, that though they had gone against him once to their cost, they would not have an opportunity of doing it again; that he had resolved *what* to do, and that it *would* be done, whether they were agreeable or not. He had allowed them to

take their own way, and what had they made of it? He would now take his, and they would all see how differently matters would prosper! In short, Mr Gobbler was to take the place which he had occupied, before their nonsense permitted this low fellow of a doctor to be preferred, in opposition to his better judgment; and all this was to be put in force, and no opposition to be offered at anybody's hand, Mr Skeldrin was so firm and decided.

Mrs Skeldrin, probably as she had little to say in favour of the doctor's innocence, did not hazard a very contradictory reply, perhaps feeling that her persuasive powers had rather an insecure groundwork in this instance.

Jeanie was, as may be supposed, very much affected at the thought of being compelled to associate with Mr Gobbler, and to put on the forced appearance of giving ear to his addresses. This her father's speech permitted her only to guess there would be little chance of avoiding, especially as she had already, since the break-up, required to baffle with considerable annoyance, occasioned by the frequency of Mr Gobbler's visits. These were daily getting very numerous and troublesome, with no probability but that they would get more so, as her father, who had hitherto encouraged them much, was now determined to increase them to the utmost he could.

Having nothing exculpatory to bring forward to clear himself of the charges which Mr Skeldrin considered so amply and satisfactorily proved against him, the doctor had not ventured to visit 'Thistle Ha' after the disruption. He knew that anything but a favourable reception was to be expected, while the whole cause of the disturbance stood in as unfavourable light as it had done at the outset, so he had little encouragement to encounter it. But his sister, who, besides having been on terms of great intimacy with Miss Skeldrin, was a person for whom Mr Skeldrin entertained a more than usual

liking, and at his desire she continued to visit them as formerly. When there, she had learned in confidence from Miss Skeldrin, that she still continued, notwithstanding all that had taken place, to hold the same attachment to the doctor that she had formerly entertained, as she felt so far convinced, from what Miss Golloch had stated about his concern and sorrow at the unexpected and unhappy occurrence, that he might not be so much to blame as circumstances evinced. She argued, that though she had no proof of his innocence, yet she could not in justice to him lay such heavy guilt to his charge, without more direct evidence of it existing; but, at the same time, as the matter stood, she could not with any propriety or delicacy openly acknowledge any regard or liking for a man with imputations of the kind resting on his character.

She saw the plight in which he stood,
But not on what it rested !
There was no course, but to remain
Till it could he divested.

While her views of the case were as stated, it may easily be imagined that the introduction of Mr Gobbler by her father, on such peremptory terms, would be the cause of no little anxiety and distress. She was to be forced and urged to the utmost, by her father's alternate threats and coaxings, to submit to the company of that individual, however much against her will it might be. She would also be required to make as little show of aversion to the amiable gentleman as possibly could be displayed, while only a very badly-veneered and ill-disguised look concealed the true state of her feelings towards him.

This favourable opinion of the subject entertained by Miss Skeldrin, no doubt afforded the doctor considerable satisfaction; and while he could not but admit the justness of Miss Skeldrin's ideas, and the candour and *truthfulness* which had dictated the conclusion, he *regretted exceedingly* that he had no other means of

refuting the charges standing against him, except by his own statements, which he knew went for very, very little indeed, in the opinion of almost every one. He knew perfectly, that although he might say he was not aware of ever having said anything to the girl that *he* could think in the least calculated to produce such ideas as would drive her to the conclusion the letter plainly showed she had arrived at, who was to know exactly what *he* might consider as likely to produce that result, or be sufficient to lead any person to form the opinions inferred from the letter?—for none was to know but he might even go the length of considering direct promises as nothing at all, simply because *he* had had no intention of fulfilling them!

Again, it might be that Katie's notions on the subject were very near the surface, and such as would magnify any little act of kindness into a more momentous matter. Then, who was to know where *she* drew the line between plain civility and attachment, or what *she* might conceive enough to form the idea upon that the latter existed?

Notwithstanding that Miss Skeldrin was pleased to be satisfied with his innocence, so long as he could not be proved guilty by more direct evidence, every person could not be expected to hold such a generous view, while the occurrence bore its black aspect in all the original hues. Unfortunately for the doctor, it happened that Miss Skeldrin had not the entire guidance of her own will left to herself, or probably matters would not have resulted as they did, and brought his visits to Thistle Ha' to an end. Neither, in all likelihood, would his old rival have obtained such an ascendancy as he now had reached, he having, through the exertions of her father, succeeded in getting himself firmly rooted into the family, which might not have been the case, had there been any avenue open whereby the doctor might have had opportunity afforded for regaining his lost ground.

It was the matter coming under the notice of Mr Tawse, as it stood in this state, that had caused him to feel considerable regret at having been so stupid as quarrel with the doctor. He now believed himself, in consequence of that, to be placed in such a position as to be unable to take advantage of the present chance of picking off the doctor, while he might be said to be in the market again. In Mr Tawse's opinion, too, it was not unlikely that the doctor would be going greatly below par, from the position he was now occupying in the public estimation, after having gone down so many steps in the stair of their favour. From this idea, Mr Tawse derived not a little satisfaction; for he fancied if he himself could make nothing of the doctor, there would still be reason for thankfulness that there was no likelihood of his being hunted down in any other quarter for some time; and if at length he might not succeed himself, he was ready to bear his failure with every consolation, if all still stood as it did, and no one got further in than he.

The tables now were likewise turned against Mr Gobbler, and Mr Tawse got his family educated to dislike him; but from motives of his own magnanimous rearing, he entered into Mr Skeldrin's intentions most approvingly, and recommended that gentleman, by all the wiles and influence in his power, to spare no pains whatever to get such a much-to-be-coveted connection as Mr Gobbler transplanted safely into his family, as long as a chance of doing it existed. Mr Tawse was now very desirous to see this union take place, in the hope that, when it was over, the doctor would be fairly free, and at the mercy of the waves again; and besides, it afforded him the secret rejoicing that this event would cause the doctor a good deal of uneasiness and distress, even although it resulted in nothing towards the furtherance of the friendly demon's own private ends. It *was also a gratifying thing for him to nourish the hope of seeing that "nasty girl Skeldrin," who had twice, he*

fancied, stood in the way of his daughter, at last be compelled to give up the struggle, and be banished into the wilds of Blawdreary against her inclination! This of itself was enough to do much more than compensate for the loss of Mr Gobbler! ay, and the doctor too! if that could not be bettered, and should also require to be borne.

It was certainly a sight to be coveted by any lover of mankind, to see this disinterested, high-minded Christian nourishing all these fine feelings of his nature, and at the same time quite carrying away plain, straightforward Mr Skeldrin by his kindly affable face, which radiantly smiled brighter and brighter, as the fresh cataracts of Thistle Ha' whisky rushed over his dry, rocky throat, and stirred up afresh the gambols and freaks of the legions of devils and other evil-inclined spirits, who held their jubilee in the extensive forests of malignant designs and wishes that were perpetually springing up in his dark mind. To Mr Skeldrin, who had never yet encountered a friendly word from any one to support or approve of his intentions, in the whole course of his efforts on behalf of Mr Gobbler, this participation in his feelings went no short way towards raising Mr Tawse up to an elevation he had scarcely expected to find himself occupying, in the midst of his coilings and twistings.

The large quantity of talkativeness and courage Mr Gobbler had managed to get imported into himself, during his now frequent visits to Thistle Ha', was something astonishing. Though even with it all, he did not quite come up to Mr Skeldrin's ideas of a fair average amount of courting, yet the little he did now and then stammer out about Jeanie getting the full command of the keys of his presses and hen-house, and that she was to have a new gown off every payment received at the cheese-sales, it pleased Mr Skeldrin pretty well on the whole, as he admitted Mr Gobbler was a "canny, quiet lad, without too much to say."

What the "canny lad" did say, being all he was capable of advancing, it served its purpose, and was all the more thought of, as it was considered the out-pourings of his sincerest affection, though flowing after his own custom, and finding exit by the only channel which he could possibly open up for the passage of the extensive currents of love which rushed out of his overflowing heart, and in which the poor girl had, with no hope of rescue, to allow herself to be carried away!

CHAPTER XXIII.

Eventful day! how hast thou changed my state!
Once on the cold and winter shaded side
Of a bleak hill, mischance had rooted me,
Never to thrive.
Transplanted now to the gay sunny vale,
Like the green thorn of May, my fortune flowers.

Home.

TIME kept his ground, and with his usual march passed on; and to all appearance the recollection of the doctor seemed to have departed and lost all place amongst the people at Thistle Ha', with the exception of Jeanie, who still continued occasionally to show that she had a hankering towards him. Now and then, despite the efforts of Mr Gobbler and the threats of her father, she would exhibit a determination that the former would find it as advantageous just to leave her alone, and intimate that he would arrive as near his purpose by being a little less pestering in his now somewhat clamorous proposals. To these, though she showed the utmost indifference, he attributed a great deal of success, and continued incessantly to pour into both her ear and her father's all the eloquence his mountain throat could groan out, associated with cheeses, hens, or sheep.

Mr Skeldrin thought it all very nice, and exerted himself to get everything kept in proper order and going on well. He could see no possible reason why his daughter should not be guided solely by his wishes; and he considered her to be possessed of, and labouring under some particularly erroneous opinions, that she could ever allow herself even to think of the doctor

again. He was also sorely puzzled to find the cause for Jeanie expressing herself, as she had occasionally done, relative to Mr Gobbler, especially after her father had as solemnly and earnestly as he could, over and over again, laid down the course he wished her to follow, and which he had as frequently assured her would greatly conduce to her future happiness and comfort in life. He attempted to impress upon her the very great deal she ought to think of Mr Gobbler's consideration, and extreme favour for her, in having had anything to do with her, after she had been in a way cast off by Dr Golloch, and treated so ill by his egregious conduct. While engaged giving out some of these declamations in favour of his benign mountaineer, Mr Skeldrin, with a view to putting the matter at rest as he was at it, went on to say that he had no doubt Jeanie would be the good dutiful girl he had always considered her;—that he hoped she would make no nonsense and outcry against what he was to tell her, but that she would rather be glad she was so fortunate as to have it in her power to take advantage of the proposals of Mr Gobbler;—that it was his wish the marriage should take place immediately, without any further fuss or ado being made about it;—and that no delay, beyond what was absolutely necessary, would be at all permitted. This was a very sad shock to poor Jeanie; but all her entreaties, that her father would take time to consider his determination, were in vain, and the kind, forgiving, soft, and feeling aspect he had worn on giving out his intentions, was replaced by the sternest countenance he had ever mounted.

Finding she could make nothing of her hard-hearted father, she set about imploring her mother to intercede on her behalf; but that good woman, who had often reproached herself as having been the cause of her daughter's bad choice in accepting the doctor, now dreaded further interference. She had to content herself by merely recommending Jeanie to take matters

as easily as she could, since putting herself about would serve nothing, now that her father had his mind quite made up, and showed no symptoms of being at all likely to change his resolution. But to give all the comfort in her power, she set about getting Jeanie reconciled to her fate the way she best could, and consoled her with the hope that Mr Gobbler might make a much better husband than either of them looked for. She directed her efforts by holding Mr Gobbler up to view as a man whom many of her young unmarried friends would be very happy to get hold of. Though she admitted him to be inferior to the doctor in some respects, she acknowledged his undoubted superiority in morals, wherein, from circumstances, it was not unreasonable to consider the latter deficient. Judiciously enough, she was advised to think herself lucky in having found out the true character of the doctor before it was too late, and impressed with the folly of grumbling more at her father doing what he thought best for her.

What to do now, after her appeal to her mother had failed, poor Jeanie did not know. Judging one course to be the whole now left her, she was forced to set about preparing to meet her fate with resignation; and she saw with considerable uneasiness that it was likely to be brought to a crisis at no very distant date.

She was not doomed to be left long brooding over her destiny, or kept in much further suspense on the subject; for the very first Sunday following her father's decision, her parents remained at home, and she too was detained there by them, for the now obvious purpose that had been hinted to her a day or two previously.

The congregation was assembled as usual in the parish church, and when the proper number he liked to read before had entered, Mr Bummer, the precentor, stood up with a small scrap of paper in his hand. Halting a moment, to see whether he was distinctly observed, he gave out, in his most flourishing tone, and

made known to all whom it might concern, that there was a marriage in contemplation between Grinton Gobbler and Jeanie Skeldrin; and that he gave notice of the important fact, for the first, second, third, last and only times it was to be mentioned, and attention specially directed to it by him.

It was with a very astonished look, and feelings anything but comfortable, that Dr Golloch heard this startling announcement. Though, before this, he had learned that Mr Gobbler had renewed the struggle, and was quite aware of Mr Skeldrin's partiality for that individual, still he had scarcely looked for the matter coming to a bearing so suddenly and unexpectedly, the more so as he knew that Jeanie, only a week or two before, had not been anticipating any proceeding of the kind, from what she had been saying to Miss Golloch. From this, it may easily be fancied that thoughts foreign to the sermon kept the doctor's mind occupied during the reverend gentleman's efforts for the good of his hearers. But on several of the assemblage besides the doctor, the able discourse was little better than thrown away; for their attention had been so intently directed towards the doctor, from the moment of Mr Bummer's alluding to the marriage, that they forgot every thing else. Many of them, too, were so much taken aback, that in their abstraction they omitted to turn to the psalms when given out, and left Mr Bummer to get through the tunes himself. But this he succeeded in accomplishing, though not without a great many more stammers and mistakes than generally embellished his performances, when he had the full help of the ladies.

Foremost among the intent gazers, and most assiduous in marking and keeping a strict eye on all the doctor's movements, were the sprightly occupants of Mr Tawse's prominent seat in the gallery. They had been ready for the church that day fully an hour before their usual time, and had got their rusty ringlets combed and

clustered into most beautiful groups, after allowing for the flurry they had been in the whole morning, for fear of losing the benefit of the intimation to be made by Mr Bummer, of which Mr Tawse had procured previous notice. This anticipated or feared misfortune they had stood in some danger of requiring to submit to, as their father, after considering the propriety of their going to church on the occasion, and weighing what he conjectured the probable consequence of the step, had at first thought it would be more advantage for them to keep the house. What induced this conclusion was the thought, that their remaining away might be construed into respect for the doctor, and help them again into his good graces.

Mrs Tawse stubbornly refused to hear of this being done, as she was afraid if they stayed at home, their absence would be set down as arising from spite at the girl Skeldrin for getting off first; and that if this circumstance reached Mrs Skeldrin's ears, it would afford her too much gratification. That was unquestionably a thoroughly objectionable construction to run the risk of incurring, and Mr Tawse had to recall his objections. But scarcely had that been adjusted, and all minds made up to go, when Mrs Tawse, in turning over to herself and re-sifting the intended proceedings, started a fresh opposition to their going, on the plea that if the Skeldrins should discover they were present, they would likely be for saying it was entirely out of curiosity, and a desire to hear their daughter's good luck made public. So it would not do, Mrs Tawse thought, to encourage the Skeldrins too much, and give them cause to think any of Mrs Tawse's family cared about the paltry concern! This would not suit, though! Mr Tawse had wanted them to take this course at first, and his wife had contradicted him. After opposing the wish of her lord and master, and venturing on the preposterous outrage of wanting it done at her own suggestion, was it likely he would allow it? Certainly not! She had

better not think or utter any such madness. Sunday and all, the worthy couple differed rather bitterly on this knotty question, and exchanged a few pretty sharp compliments; but Mr Tawse decided that he *would* take his daughters to church, if he pleased; at the same time, he allowed anybody leave to contradict him that dared, or thought that it would serve them anything trying to sway him! Mr Tawse, Mede-like, confirmed his will, and his wife took a sulky fit; and after telling him he would bring disgrace upon his family, she put away her Sunday bonnet into a bandbox, and sat down to read hymns with the book upside down, and a most rigid determination to resist all their entreaties to go to church with them. Glad to get, they did not trouble her with any, as they had little time, but marched away without her. Notwithstanding her forced endeavours to stay at home, Mrs Tawse got unable to bear the idea of not hearing the couple "cried." The church bell giving out its most tempting peals as her wavering took root, she broke her resolution, hastily re-mounted her bonnet, and making all the haste she could, she had the satisfaction of getting forward in time to have her ears greeted with the monotonous voice of the precentor as he delivered the proclamation.

Despite the lengthy and inspiring sermon which Mr Screevinscreed had bestowed great care in the composition of, and delivered with all his energy and pathos, the staring on the doctor was kept up with unwearied and anxious zeal. It was not till after the conclusion of the service, and when Mr Butterscales' two substantial and noisy babies were brought in for baptism, that the eyes of the gazers were taken off him, and directed towards them. Mr Butterscales took the fancy of the gazers very much, he being so embarrassed and put about at the doing of his part of the duty. This affected him so, that he almost let the first one fall through between his arms, though he had been practising all morning how to hold it properly. In this instance,

however, he had not had the free use of both hands, in consequence of having a snuff between his finger and thumb. But in trying to remove this detriment, by transferring it to his nose, while in the act of lifting the second youngster, he let a good share of it into the child's eyes, which produced such a noise and squalling, that it was a good while before it recovered so far as to allow the clergyman to proceed. It at length subsided; and when the baptism was finished, the two were removed screaming in chorus. To the dispersing congregation, the blunders of Mr Butterscales afforded pretty good matter for commenting on to all who had a taste that way; and indeed these blunders, and the doctor together, made more impression on most of the hearers than the sermon itself, which was the seventh-Sunday-in-succession of the reverend gentleman's discoursing or wanderings in the Valley of Dry Bones.

CHAPTER XXIV.

On Sunday, here an altered scene
O' men and manners meets our een.
Ane maist wad trow some people chose
To change their faces wi' their clothes,
And fain wad gar ilk neebor think
They thirst for guidness as for drink :
But there's an unco dearth o' grace,
That has nae mansion but the face!

Ferguson.

JOY again found its way into the happy family of Mr Tawse, at seeing the doctor fairly disengaged and free for another struggle; and Mr Tawse would gladly have gone the length of congratulating him on the occurrence, although ever so absurd a proceeding, if he had only been able to summon the courage to speak.

On the way home, Mrs Tawse kept up her sour looks a while; but the sermon, the doctor, and Mr Butterscales all combined, proved too much for her. Though she made a great effort to hold her tongue, and even attempted to bite both it and her lips to help her to keep silent, the gloom with which she had invested herself gradually wore off. When she heard her daughters and their father passing all their lively and interesting remarks, she broke loose, and joined them, and finally took her husband's arm the rest of the way.

Mr Tawse was determined to have the doctor back again, by some means or other; and before they had begun their dinner, they had a great many propositions advanced for this end, and submitted for consideration. He thought himself, that as it would be advantageous to set about it as soon as possible, it would be perhaps

the best way to go along after dinner, so that no time might be lost. But after he had eaten a bite or two, and viewed this over, his courage decreased so much that he felt incapable of taking such a course. His wife proposed putting one of themselves to bed as unwell, and getting the doctor called in professionally; but there was danger here again that he might detect their intentions, and find they were feigning. Mr Tawse groped his mouth, to ascertain whether any straggling symptoms of toothache existed in that cavity, as possibly getting up some little thing in that way might facilitate their purposes; but he felt somewhat loath to part with any of his grinders, so long as they gave him no uneasiness. For his family's sake, he was in a way ready to sacrifice a great deal; but in this instance he was not able to get a clear and distinct idea of any resort which he considered there was much chance of a successful result following its being put into effect. To call on the doctor, and make an apology or excuse for past doings, was a step, if anything, a little too demeaning to take, if it could be by any possibility dispensed with; and to call and ask the doctor to do so, was equally wild, if not extravagant in the extreme. They were perplexed; and how to bring about an agreement they could not decide. The Misses, in the midst of these difficulties, modestly hinted that some little thing in the party-giving way might be brought round, and perhaps prove satisfactory in serving their purpose, if the doctor could be got to attend. Mrs Tawse, after making some calculation in which the counting of her fingers with great care was involved, declared herself as highly pleased with the suggestion, except that it would be a source of additional expense. But she thought it could be put off till the time arrived at which their annual turn-out of the kind was meant to be held, which was now within a very few weeks of coming round again. Mr Tawse was of opinion that, under the circumstances, it would be a pity to let the expense be

an obstacle, for all the little cost that would be incurred. He supposed that, with proper engineering and management, a very few biscuits and rarities of the same class might be made to suffice for the occasion, provided his own household would stick out stanchly against eating them, and leave them to be partaken of by the guests only, and in this way what were not used could easily be preserved for the future occasion alluded to.

Being such a momentous case, it was agreed that they would be perfectly justified in calling a few of their friends together immediately, without delaying on any account. Though this step received ample approval, and was decided to be instantly acted on; yet as they had no wish to commit themselves so far as to render it out of their power to avoid giving the party, if they should be unsuccessful in securing the doctor's attendance, it was resolved to let the doctor be the first invited. In this way, if he should accept, they would easily manage to get a few others to meet him; and if it should be that he was so far left to himself as decline, then it could be let quietly slip over. There was still a difficulty about the probability of Miss Golloch accepting, whether her brother should do so or not; but this was surmounted with no very great trouble, though it looked rather a staggering question at first. Mr Tawse, with his far-seeing acuteness, altered the plan of the proceeding to meet this, by simply making it a gentleman's party, from which it could afterwards be changed to a mixed company, if the doctor should agree to attend.

The marriage of Miss Skeldrin naturally came next in turn, and was thoroughly hacked and put to the torture; for, being to them a most aggravating occurrence, it was not calculated to make very cheerful feelings pervade their family circle. But to make up for its distressing associations as far as possible, Mr Tawse cheered them with the hope that he might be able to *procure invitations* to the wedding, if chance or opportunity should bring him into contact with Mr Skeldrin

at a time when the subject could be touched on without appearing too intrusive. Such chances mostly happening over their potations, it was not altogether unlikely that one might arise before the ceremony, when they were so often employed in that way at other times.

Getting this settled, Mr Butterscales' blunders and awkwardness were then taken up, they having been next in succession the most attractive circumstances which had come under their notice that day; and the mistake with the snuff being particularly repulsive to Mr Tawse, Mr Butterscales was not spared in their reckoning of his conduct.

These more interesting novelties of the day having been got through, the daughters and their mother entered into a more general strain of remarks and observations on Mr Butterscales' two children, and on the bonnets, shawls, gowns, cloaks, ribbons, brooches, and parasols that had been worn by sundry members of the congregation. This not being at all interesting to Mr Tawse, or a kind of conversation he could participate in with any relish, he grew tired of listening to it, and gravely reminded them what day it was, and that it was not proper to be indulging in such profane conversation on such an occasion. He then with pious gravity directed them to take their Bibles, and read the account of the Tower of Babel, as being both a more fitting and profitable occupation, and one calculated to afford an ample illustration of the folly of placing too much reliance on their own capabilities, or feeling over confident of success in anything they might be about to undertake. Like obedient children, they did as ordered, and read their worthy father asleep before they had made much progress with the chapter, after which, not being much interested about it themselves, they gave it up, and returned to their conversation again. They now turned their valuable attention to the audacity of some servant girls who, they thought, had been trying to imitate them by adorning their

wrists with strings of mournful-looking black beads, and leaning their arms so beautified over the seats, and otherwise impertinently exposing them to view. This had raised the ire of the Tawse family; for ladies like them felt hurt when they saw servants or others of the class either carrying a parasol, or wearing any small ornaments, however honestly they might have been purchased or come by. Another species of outrage on their aristocratic rights made them excessively bitter. This was sundry encroachments on the genteel fashion of leaving the church, which were being perpetrated by several of the commonalty, and which, to their thinking, necessitated great need of suppression before the custom should take too deep root. It was vulgar, they thought, to leave the church after the conclusion of the service, without first sitting down, and staring on the other retiring attendants. But they had seen some resuming their seats after the last prayer, who in their eyes had no right to share in this high act of etiquette, and their rancour had accordingly taken fire at it. Poor stupid mortals! they did not like to retire with the mob—they could not get out comfortably among them; but though at times no one occupied the gallery but themselves, they had still to delay behind, genteelly waiting for room! Their dear papa would surely try to get this right reserved!

The clattering and rattling made in setting down the tea-cups disturbed the repose of the sleeper, and made him scold and grumble very ill-naturedly; and when the bread was all prepared and everything ready, he, for some reason or other, refused to partake with them. He stuck out against all their whinings with no little resolution, till his wife, under the promise of putting something in his last cup, succeeded in getting him partially to return to his agreeable mood. Notwithstanding his deep gloom before the magic promise, it quickly disappeared, and he went through the very short grace with great rapidity and correctness. Tea began,

and he crammed his mouth with ravenousness and dexterity, and in a very short time reached the limits of his allowance, except the portion which had been alluded to in the promise. This, too, was quickly filled out, with an addition from a long-necked, suspicious-looking bottle, which, from Mr Tawse's pleased look, was doubtless *the* "something" that had so remarkably cleared and filtered his spirits. The smiles were now brought back into his face, and his voice returned to the conversation more cheerfully than ever. The day then closed in peace over the happy fireside, and they went early to bed, to bring the morning soon round, as they wearied to see the result of their afternoon's debate.

CHAPTER XXV.

No disappointment could he ever brook :
The brook of Patience he must always cross,
For every little cross. He cross would even look
If nothing he might have to cause him trouble,
Which would his crave for anger e'en support.
Pile upon pile he'd build it till 'twould double,
Then vent his rage wherever it vent could find,
Finding the venting served to ease his mind.

VISIONS of their beloved pastor, beside a few ladies in beautiful dresses, and one or two bashful-looking gentlemen with cherry-coloured, tallow-like cheeks, arranged round him, haunted the repose of the Misses Tawse on the night we have just left them. They heard in their sleep the solemn questions asked by his Reverence, and the ever-binding promises doled out in responses, or saw the still, clumsy bow made in acknowledgment of the impressive charge laid down to make known the magnitude of the vows taken. They felt the trembling hand joined to theirs, and the modest look arising as the chin seemed to fall on the breast, when they got unable to sustain the gaze of those surrounding them after the momentous agreement! These were delightful dreams! How grievous that such felicitous, nocturnal visitations are doomed not to be realized! They only got their bonnets fitted on, and all ready to depart, when the rattling sound of the carriage that was to drive them away started and awoke them! Their eyes were rubbed, but naught save "darkness visible" was seen around,—the assembled party all gone, and they alone in their beds in Bramble-Green! To shake the pillow in ill-natured, though

perhaps excusable chagrin, turn round, and wish in many whirling, disconnected ideas for the fulfilment of what had glided from their reach, were the only consolations left.

They rolled and tossed in every way—
Sometimes they sat, sometimes they lay;
Then thought all o'er again,
And thankful felt that none but they
Could ever know their pain.

Waking and falling asleep, and waking again, intermixed with a few more dreams and starts, brought in the light, and morning came! Clothing was speedily huddled on, and breakfast rapidly put in progress of preparation. Amidst the multifarious and constant commands, the servant-maid, of mistake-making notoriety, was scolded out of her senses for having allowed the side to be burned out of a herring that had been incautiously left on the gridiron. This loss was threatened to be kept from her scanty wages, along with the value of a bottle half-full of variously-scented, rancid hair-oil she had upset and broken the week before. Another marine luxury had to be prepared with more caution, and it and the remains of the martyr were taken in to the breakfast-table, with their mouths open in the whistling form they generally have. These were made into skeletons with such speed and cleanness, as would have brought envy into a whole bogful of tadpoles; and when breakfast had been devoured, the crockery and crackling tray removed, the grand topic was brought forward for discussion.

The doctor had to be summoned, as agreed to the previous night. Slate-pencil and slates, and Cumberland-lead and funeral-letter backs, were accordingly put into elaborate requisition, to fabricate a form suitable to the uncommon occasion.

With much disputing, a great deal of labour and mental trouble, and after two separate pennyworths of extra fine note-paper had been destroyed, an elegantly-

worded and prettily-written invitation note was got ready, and despatched to Dr Gollooh, politely requesting his attendance on a certain day. The Misses, in their anxiety to know the upshot, went halfway with the bearer, to await his return with the answer; and when he re-appeared with it, though addressed to their papa, they broke the seal on the spot. Dreadfully excruciating was their disappointment at finding their kindness declined in rather icy terms; and their inclination to tear and dance upon the letter, was only restrained by knowing that their father would dispose of it himself in the most degrading way his ingenuity and spite could suggest.

Ourang-outangs are rare in this country; but some may have occasionally seen those ill-used, smaller-sized animals of the same species that are sometimes compelled to jump and grimace to the music of their extortive owners. Well, those who have seen these unfortunate quadrupeds, and paid any attention to them, must have viewed the innate savage disposition shown in their unwilling countenances when forced to continue their distressing gymnastics, till almost physically unable either to stop or continue them. Those who have witnessed anything of this nature, will have a very faint idea of the improvement made in the exasperated countenance of the schoolmaster, when the doctor's half-dozen lines were put into his hand. Like a large dancing monkey, he was fierce and furious; like it, he knew what made him so; and liker it still, he had no power to retaliate, though he had all the wish! How often and variedly he did recite the doom of the everlastingly condemned, and in his frantic rage what revenge he threatened on those who had had the impertinence to cause the inflation of his anger! Fiercely exasperated, he turned on the trembling Miss who had proposed the party, and scolded her into a flood of tears, in which her sisters joined to save a fresh volley on themselves. Each of their fivepence-worths of

tender, lace-bordered muslin was speedily soaked with the briny, cheek-bleaching deluges that distilled from their woe-reddened optics, till his wrath abated. Out of their fits of grief they were by degrees brought; and when papa began to relent having vented his ire on them, and commenced to bombard his better-half for her share in their disgrace, they got round to dry sobs, and soon thereafter recovered.

Sitting in the sigh-impregnated atmosphere did not suit the disposition of our irritated friend. He sought the open air, to try whether the breeze or out-of-door sights would moderate or dispel his troubles, or serve to displace them by others less disagreeable and easier borne than the load of them he carried. Telling the Misses to see to the school in his absence, and get a big boy to assist in maintaining discipline, dragging the tasks from the unwilling pupils, or making a register of any unlucky or obstreperous urchins, he evacuated on a cruise.

Always obsequious where excess of sovereigns commanded or other reason necessitated the appearance of respect, an approaching carriage attracted his notice in passing along. Though the workings within him were severe, he made a bold attempt to draw the contortions of his features into something pleasanter. The well-known horses came up with their envied proprietor's receptacle behind. Mr Tawse made ready to salute, and with a fascinating twist he elevated his head-covering. But, bad luck again! just as this act of folly was completed, the footman in full uniform lay half out of the carriage window, smiling at the mistake. He had been getting an inside passage, as an act of favour from the driver, as it was raining a little, and the carriage was going back empty. How aggravating and demeaning this act of homage was! He crushed on the beaver, and vowed that he would not lift it again even to the Earl himself. He next encountered their Sunday-songster, Mr Bummer, whom he severely reprimanded

for having had the impertinence to hazard an opinion as to the condition of the atmosphere when passing the Misses a few days before. Poor Bummer had his hands in his pockets, and all he could do in presence of the fierce and dreaded tyrant was to squeeze his pitchfork in desperation, and pass on in silence. Expecting that a word of comfort or a glass might be gleaned from Mr Butterscales, he lounged into the establishment of that gentleman. The agreeable merchant was not behind the counter, and Mr Tawse gruffly asked the new boy where his master was, whereupon he ran round the counter and shouted into the cellar. Mr Butterscales, it appeared, had misinterpreted the shout, as he called out, if it were a beggar, to tell him there was nothing for him, and send him away, as he could not be assisted. He next very harshly proclaimed his conviction that young Lump-Sugar was showing no symptoms of ever being likely to get a thorough understanding of that rule of the establishment. Mr Studdie was in the shop when Mr Tawse entered, and through force of habit held out his snuff-box, which was so disdainfully refused, that Vulcan resolved to take revenge by sending in an account for the mole-catcher's spade he had made six months before for Mr Tawse. After a little parley, the unseen Samaritan was made to comprehend that it was not exactly a wandering vagrant, and he intimated that he would appear in sight immediately. With his sleeves tucked up, and his face and arms so smeared with celestial blue, that he might have passed for a chief of some ferocious Indian tribe, the worthy came in view. Finding it was Mr Tawse, he made a professional apology, intermixed with one or two common-place French syllables, meant to be inquiries after his health. It was then explained that the smith had been wishing to ornament some agricultural implements, and that for the purpose he had been preparing paint from the said *blue* and a mixture of remarkable "sweet, whale boiled *linseed oil*." This singular commodity, his sign showed,

was to be had on the premises, along with "country-grown barley," "inexhaustable pork," and extraordinary seeds, that were held out actually to grow in "fields and gardens."

This sedate individual seeing, from the usual Latin grin not following his French, that his friend was "on his high horse," had to ask him into the inhabited end of the domicile; and when the colouring had been eradicated from the ornamented portions of his person, he sat down to have a talk with his captivating visitor.

Speaking dry-mouthed, by both an abhorred pastime, was objectionable in the extreme; and though Mr Butterscales grudged to produce the necessity-demanded accompaniment, it had to be set down, and some solacing Glenlivet, or other enlivening similitude of it, from some remote or otherwise famed distillery, was produced.

The sequel need hardly be told. Part of it soon opened Mr Tawse's mind, and Mr Butterscales' heart softened so much, that he quite overlooked the fact of the whisky being his own. But for Mrs Butterscales, all in the shop might have gone. She tried first to persuade them that they had taken plenty; and when that would not do, she locked the whole attractions away.

Mr Tawse attempted to get his ally to rebel, by ironically hinting the happiness it would give him, and the extreme longing and liking he had to see any of his people at home serve any friend of his in such a disrespectful way, and suggested a transference of their persons to the "Cheerie Farmers." This, Mr Butterscales was afraid to venture, so the lively pair had to part.

In a little better mood, Mr Tawse slunk back to the school, rewarded with his leathern namesakes some refractory spirits, then gave them a half-holiday, to show he liked them to enjoy themselves in moderation, and spent the remainder of it himself in a way it is not worth our trouble to narrate.

CHAPTER XXVI.

That hour o' nicht's black arch the keystone,
The dreary hour he mounts his beast in ;
And sic a nicht he takes the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

Burns.

It was pretty late in the evening of a wet and stormy day. From its pitiless pelting, Dr Golloch had just found refuge in his own house, and had sat down at the fire to pass the interval before preparing to retire for the night. His thoughts naturally turned upon Jeanie Skeldrin, and what was so soon to take place at Thistle Ha', which would put it out of his power ever to hope more for the realization of his fondest wish. While his mind wandered over all that had led to his misfortune, or whirled and mixed in untraceable confusion, he sat gazing listlessly at the fire, from which his attention was only now and then attracted by the rain coming with unusually loud and angry pattering against the window. From this his notice would be again suddenly drawn to the grate, as the hissing of some stray drops, that occasionally found their way down the chimney, trickled through the soot into the fire. As he thus sat in his reverie, he was suddenly called to a sense of his whereabouts, by the clanging of the door-bell, which was suddenly rung with such a furious jerk, that it took some time to get into quiet again.

As the door opened, he heard a voice speaking which he thought he knew, though he could not at the moment recognise the owner. But before he had time for calling up his recollection, the room-door was thrown open,

and Watty Baton, the police-officer, entered. He was in his usual full costume, with the addition of his waterproof cape, which glistened with the rain, and the expression of his countenance betokened that he had something of interest to make known.

Putting his wet hat under a chair, and sitting down rather uncomfortable-looking, he drew forth his note-book, and asked the doctor to mark down the time of his entrance. When this was done, he proceeded to inform the doctor that word had just reached him from Humphrey Handcuff, his professional brother in a neighbouring parish, that a body had been found in the river, which he thought had probably been floated down from a distance by the force of the current. The water had been much swollen by recent rains, and this, in Mr Baton's opinion, rendered it exceedingly probable that the body referred to would be that of the girl who had gone away from the doctor's. Mr Baton then explained that it was not exactly his duty to perform the great service he had done in calling to tell the doctor of this, but that it was just because he had promised to communicate anything he might hear, that he had taken the earliest opportunity of letting this intelligence be known.

The doctor expressed some surprise that the body should have been such a length of time in the river without having cast up, or some trace of its existence there having been seen, if it should turn out to be that of his late servant; but, in his opinion, decomposition would doubtless be in a very advanced stage, if not altogether so far gone as to preclude the possibility of identity, except by the clothing.

Watty remarked, in opposition to this, that "things sometimes keeps a dainty gliff in the water when it was aye rinnin' fresh;" and instanced several occasions on which he had seen cats fished out about six months after they had been drowned, turn out to be, as he termed it, as "fresh and lively-lookin' as the first day they gaed

in," and he could see no reason why it might not be the same with what they were speaking of. He stated, that he and Charlie Spades had arranged to go down the following morning to see how matters stood, and were to take Mr Artichoke's cart with them; and if it should turn out to be "what they expeckit, they wad bring her hame quite comfortable." This savoured of Watty's own expectations being very sanguine; and it likewise appeared, from Watty's account, that Charlie too felt very confident of the issue of the expedition. So much indeed had this certainty got hold of Charlie, that his friend had experienced some difficulty in preventing him from preparing the grave beforehand, which he had at first insisted on doing, in order that no time might be lost in getting the body buried. However, the logical powers of Watty having clearly represented the impropriety of this step, Charlie had eventually resolved to put it off, till the fact of whether the duty of interment lay with another parish, should be correctly ascertained. Getting through what he had to say, and finishing the spirits the doctor had served him with by way of compensation for his mindfulness, and his trouble and inconvenience in going through the rain to tell him, the officer took his departure, thanking the doctor for his "deevilish kindness," and promising to let him know all that might take place the moment after his return from inquiring about the body.

The house was again left in quietness, and the doctor sat down to resume his train of musing, which had been disturbed by the entrance of the officer.

He was not thus left long to himself; for the door was hardly closed, when a loud noise at it again attracted the notice of the inmates. Before the hammering had quite ceased, Willie was heard inquiring, as he opened the door, "What the deevil was meant by makin' sich a thunderin' noise?" and whether the *knocker* had considered them deaf, or what other reason *he had for making* such an awful clatter.

"Sowl of you!" returned a loud voice, with a strong Irish accent, "is the masther within?"

"Is it the doctor ye mean?" inquired Willie.

"Sure an' it is, honey," returned the visitor. "Isn't they all of them one, the same entirely?"

"Why dae ye disturb us at this time? what's wrang wi' ye? an' whare dae ye come frae?" again inquired Willie.

"Och! sowl of ye!" replied the voice, "and it's from the Drift Valley Brickwork, at the back of the Grey Hill; and give ye the love of Larry O'Grunter, it's the jewel of his heart that's bad, worse luck. Isn't the masther within, dear?"

"I'll see," returned Willie, turning in; "but I don't think he'll gang oot sich a lang way in a nicht like this."

Larry entered the lobby, and Willie proceeded to the doctor's room.

"What does all that noise mean?" inquired the doctor, as Willie entered. "Who is that?"

"It's a man, they ca' Larry something, wantin' ye tae gang tae Drift Valley, sir," returned Willie.

"O, nonsense!" returned the doctor; "I can't go there again. It'll likely be some of them got his legs or arms sprained, throwing his neighbour over his head with a shovel, like what I was called away about the other night. What does he say is wrong?"

"He says the 'jewel o' his heart,' or something aboot it, is bad," returned Willie; "but I'll ask again."

"Oh! the 'jewel of his heart.' Well, just tell him to go to Dr Plyphleme," said Dr Golloch. "I don't think I'll go so far to-night."

Willie returned as directed, and told Larry to go to Dr Plyphleme, as Dr Golloch had been out all day.

"Och, then! and if it's detarmined he is," returned Larry, crushing his old hat firmly on his head, and sitting down, "I'll be aqually stiff as his honour, and won't lave this on this *pracious* charmin' evening, that's

sartin, unless he goes wid me, or by himself alone, so as if he does it. Just give him that small bit of my mind, like a jewel."

"I really can't disturb the doctor again," returned Willie.

"Och, then! if ye can't," said Larry, rising and taking the candlestick, "I'll be arter seeing his honour myself, if you won't."

"You must really not disturb the doctor," said Willie, stepping before him. "The quieter ye leave the house the better. The doctor says he can't go."

"The quieter you keep yourself the better, young spalpeen," returned Larry, grasping his shillelah, and looking very fiercely from under his hat, "or it's yer pardon I won't perhaps be at all axin' if I knocks ye down;—that's all, my darlint."

Willie took the hint, and stood out of this terrible character's way, when he proceeded to the room which he had seen Willie leave.

"So yer honour don't maen to go wid me, then?" he said, as he opened the room-door.

"Why do you come and disturb me at this hour?" said the doctor, turning round, and eyeing the intruder from head to feet.

"Be jabers, yer honour!" he returned, "I hadn't the time to my own choice, sure and I hadn't, or it wouldn't have been such an intarnal night I'd have been arter taking to come in. But you must look to going back wid me, yer honour, though it wasn't half so good. The owld woman's uncommon bad, she is; and though the avenin's not purty, it's better nor if it wasn't so good; so yer won't refuse to go wid me, jewel."

"Well," returned the doctor, somewhat amused at the man's strange bearing, and wishing to see a little more of him, "I will go if you pay me; but not one foot will I stir, unless you do so first."

"Och! sure and ye *will* be paid, honey," returned Larry, scratching his head; "but yer honour won't be

hard on a poor lab'rin' man, that's got thumpin' lots of childer, and more a-comin' (the Virgin bless them!) What's yer honour's charge?"

"Ten shillings will do," returned the doctor, after considering a moment. "Out with it."

"Och, lor! an' I never had sich a fortin' in this blessed life of me," returned Larry, groaning. "All I have in the howly world is this here that I brought on purpose," and he proceeded to count it down on the table, in a row consisting of eight or ten sixpences.

"O, nonsense! out with it," said the doctor, by way of trying him further, and almost smiling at his grimaces and gestures, though hardly in the mood. "Turn out the rest, Larry; quick!"

"Sure, you'd take the blood of St Patrick," said Larry, groping his wallet, and producing a halferown-piece. "This is the last copper I have in earth, worse luck!" he added very mournfully, as he placed it on the table alongside the sixpences.

"Then you must just go home for more," said the doctor, resuming the seat he had left a minute or two before. "I can't go without it."

"O, pokers take it! that's too bad, sir," replied Larry, imploringly. "I'm a dacent man, yer honour, and it's a hurtin' o' my finest feelings as you'll be arter."

The doctor knowing the nature of his customer, and more to test him than with the thoughts of

'Picking his pouch as bare as winter
O' a' kind coin,'

said, "Well, well, I can't help it. Turn out another halferown, and I'll go with you. Come away!"

"Why, by the piper of Clare! ye're as stiff as a Carrickfargus oyster; and I'd almost think yer honour was a witch, or know'd a smattering of legerdemain," said Larry, grinning, and untying the napkin that girded his thick neck. "But I s'pose the article's here *that's been made in the purpose to satisfy yer honour*;

and I naedn't go farder round about wid it, like a duck with a straw through its nose, to keep it out of the faelds of cornn."

As he spoke, he carefully unfolded the napkin, and from a small bit of paper in the centre he produced a half-sovereign. He threw it down; and picking up the other coins, and stowing them away carefully, he replaced his handkerchief, saying, "I hope yer honour is after moving shortly now, as ye've got what ye wanted."

"I would rather that you had gone to Dr Plyphleme, as I have been out all day," said the doctor, giving a turn through the room; but his manner showed that his anxiety for the welfare of Mrs O'Grunter was eradicating his scruples.

"Dr Plyflame! Dr Plyflame!" ejaculated Larry. "Is it Dr Plyflame yer honour maens? Why, sure and I wouldn't have him. Dr Plyflame! lor, an' I wouldn't be him, though I'd myself into the bargain—wouldn't have him for a paice of me aven; and the owld woman wouldn't either, that's more, yer honour!"

"You're a set of curious fellows!" said the doctor, with a smile, as he lifted the coin. "I suppose I *must* go now. But look here," he continued, taking a crown from his pocket, and handing it to Larry, "there's that to yourself; and if you had not cost me so much trouble to get it out of you, you'd perhaps have got it all."

"Sowl, and it's a gravious pity you didn't trouble yourself to mintion that thrifle sooner, darlint, and I'd have aised ye the bother considerable," said Larry, grinning.

"There you are," said the doctor, tossing him another crown. "Get the horse ready," he added, addressing Willie, who had been standing at the door watching the proceedings.

"Och, sowl of ye! and it's a right good jintleman yer honour is, sure. Aye, two of them, be jabers!" said Larry, seizing the coin. "Sowl of ye! and I'll

remimber yer honour till the echo of Chul-a-han-lua-gel rings wid music at the wake of Larry O'Grunter."

In a few minutes, the doctor was equipped for the road; and after making some inquiries about the particular house, he set off at the gallop on his solitary journey, leaving Larry to follow on foot through the pelting rain, and make his way home as he best might.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Alas ! what's now his fate ? Sure evil has
O'erta'en him on the way. The steed returned !
Hark ! at the stable door he neighs alone ;
It augurs nothing good.

AFTER Dr Golloch departed to render assistance to Mrs O'Grunter, and Larry, her indefatigable husband, had also set out on his way home, Willie Artichoke betook himself to the kitchen, to await the doctor's return. As he knew that if he went off to bed he would likely be roused very soon to put up the horse, he thought it scarcely worth while to do so ; but he lay down at full length before the fire, to rest at ease awake, or be in a convenient sleeping posture if sleep should overtake him. He had remained in this position about two hours or so, and had got into a half-conscious half-sleeping state, when he started suddenly, rubbed his eyes, and looked around as if to reply to some one who had spoken to him. Thinking it would be the doctor got back, he listened for the usual signal ; but none being given, he lay down again as before. But the neighing of a horse outside was heard shortly thereafter, when he quickly arose, and lighting his stable-lantern, proceeded to the door. The rain had almost abated, but it was pretty dark. He could see nothing either of the doctor, or the horse that had been neighing ; but in case he should not have heard the rap on the window, which was the signal usually given, he proceeded to the stable, to see whether the doctor had not gone *there himself*, on finding his knocking unanswered. On *reaching the stable*, he was somewhat surprised to find

the horse standing alone, all bespattered with mud, and the bridle-reins broken and hanging among its feet. It was blowing with inflated nostrils, and appeared to have had a long, quick gallop. This was rather alarming, and he instantly concluded that something had befallen the doctor, as the horse was in this state. He therefore resolved to set off immediately, and ascertain, if possible, the nature of the accident, or the reason of the horse's return home. He accordingly tied up the animal in the stable, and put a blanket around it, to prevent it cooling too rapidly. Without acquainting Miss Golloch with what had occurred, as he knew she would be greatly alarmed at it, he shut the kitchen-door, and went off to prosecute his search.

Knowing the course the doctor would take on his way to Drift Valley, Willie decided to go direct there by that road. To keep himself company on the way, and render any help that might be needed if they found the doctor thrown from his horse and hurt, or injury from any other cause to have been sustained, he stopped at his father's in passing, to ask him to go also.

Willie rapped first on the window, and then at the door; but as there was no sound from within, in evidence of his being heard, he applied his foot to the door very firmly. Directly following this, he recognised the voice of his mother crying loudly out, apparently to her husband, that there was somebody "reelin' at the door like to bring down the house." Shortly after the sounding of his mother's notes of alarm, a rustling noise was heard, and some loud grumblings about "pittin' folk oot o' their beds sae early." A smash, as if some one falling, was next heard, followed by imprecations that were poured down on the thing that had been in the way and caused the tumble.

Willie cried out to look sharp and get the door opened, and the light of a candle at length began to reflect through the window. By degrees the gleams drew near, and shone through the seams and keyhole.

when his father emphatically inquired from behind, "Wha's there?"

"Tuts, man! div ye no ken my tongue?" cried Willie. "Open the door, and no keep me stannin' hammerin' a' nicht."

"Ay! what the deevil dae ye want at this hour?" returned his father, as he undid the lock, and presented himself before his son, armed with a coal-axe, and looking as if he had expected to meet with resistance from some terrible character of the robber or burglar class. He did not seem to have been in bed, though his eyes were those of a person just risen from sleep, as, with the exception of a nightcap, he had just the clothes on that he usually wore. His son guessed at once how matters stood, and on entering found it to be as he suspected; for the arm-chair and a pair or two of blankets lay broadside on the floor. The truth was, that Benjie had been tasting in the fore part of the night, and had returned home in a mood he was sometimes in, when it happened that he

"Wasna fu', but just had plenty;"

and on these occasions such a vast amount of trouble was required to induce him to go to bed, that his good-wife generally took the quiet way of waiting till he should fall asleep in the chair, when she would gently tumble him and it together on the floor, and make him as comfortable there as might be in her power. It was evident he had been reposing there on his lowly bed that night, and in his hurry had tumbled over the chair, instead of coming out of bed, as he had fancied himself to be doing, when he was disturbed by his son.

Mrs Artichoke sat up in bed in astonishment when she heard what was wanted, and nearly crushed her infant to death in her haste to get herself turned round towards the speaker. The noise set up by the injured urchin brought down on the mother some unceremonious remarks and reproofs from her lord and master, when

the howling got so high as to prevent his hearing Willie's narration quite distinctly. He was, at length, made to understand what was meant; and being quite in the humour for an expedition of the sort, he agreed to set off without delay. Throwing aside his nightcap very disdainfully, he began a search for his bonnet; but not being able to find it amongst the confusion, he had to content himself with the rejected head-covering, which he resumed, and they departed on their search.

Heedless of the solemn nature of the case that had required them to be out at that hour of night, or rather morning, Mr Artichoke was exceedingly merry, as his potations were not thoroughly evaporated. Dividing his attention between telling innumerable stories and reciting rhymes that he had learned in his younger days, they in this way got over the first two miles or so of their journey without falling in with any traces of the doctor, or any indications of the supposed accident having taken place. The rain had now ceased, and as daylight was approaching, it was not so dark as to prevent them seeing any object close to them; but a thick, dense mist precluded their view to any distance around. They now got clear of the regular highway, and emerged on the moor, where the only road was a kind of path beaten in the turf. This track ran round by a circuitous wind to the place where the doctor had been called to visit his patient; and though they could easily have struck across in a direct line, and by so doing have cut off a great portion of the distance, yet, as this path was the only way by which the doctor could have gone, especially in the dark and on horseback, they agreed to keep by it, in case of missing him, as they would be certain to do if they went direct across to Drift Valley, and he should be lying hurt by the way.

They pursued their course as well as they could, and got on much in the same way, till Benjie, happening to

lurch a little to the side, went splash to the knees in a kind of boggy hole, when getting him extricated caused a little variation. While this misfortune called forth a curse or two at the bad roads, it did not disconcert him in the least, as it only had the effect of exciting his musical faculties to operation; for almost as soon as he got on his legs again, he began singing—

“As I cam in by Paul’s door,
 Eelie oolie ag lag—
 As I cam in by Paul’s door,
 I tumbled in a sheuch-bag.
 Sing tarrel arrel oorel a,
 Eelie oolie ag lag—
 As I cam in by Paul’s door,
 I tumbled in a sheuch-bag.”

This seemed to please his fancy a good deal, as he repeated it several times, though he admitted that he could not do it all the justice he would have wished, as he was bothered a little with what he termed a “harmonious cold.” This had kept him croaking and coughing occasionally; and being seized with a fit of it as he spoke, it seemed on its subsiding that he had forgot the rest of his adventures at “Paul’s door,” as he did not continue them. However, he soon declared he would try another new one, of which he said he had picked up a couple of verses. Before beginning, he explained that he entertained an especial favour for it, on account of its beautiful chorus, and expressed a hope that his son would join in it like a Britoner, when he commenced as follows:—

’Twas Smuggler Will cam down the hill,
 Wi’ whisky in a barrel;
 The suld guidwife was bakin’ cakes,
 An’ swapped him wi’ a farrel.
 The twa sat down tae tak their dram,
 But little were they thinkin’
 The suld guidman, wi’ fury bent,
 Wad come and catch them drinkin’!
*Sing tarrel arrel a, and sing tarrel arrel addie,
 Sing tarrel arrel a, sweet wi’ me, my laddie.*

But tho' his wrath was flamin' high,
The whisky did it smother,
And he sat doun beside the twa,
And they a' got fou thegither!
Sing tarrel arrel a, and sing tarrel arrel addie,
Sing tarrel arrel a, sweet wi' me, my laddie.
Sing tidy duntum da, sing tidy duntum daddie,
Sing tidy duntum da, sweet wi' me, my laddie.

"Chorus like the deevil, Willie!" he vociferated at the top of his voice; "chorus like the deevil!" and they went over the "tarrel arrel a" again, greatly to Benjie's satisfaction.

By this time, they had described the greater part of the circuit which they had to go round, and had come upon the heath, where the tracks made by the sheep struck out in different angles. As it was not yet very light, some attention was required to keep their road; but they took the path that seemed to have been oftenest followed, intending now to go on direct to Larry O'Grunter's, without attempting to keep a look-out till they should hear what had passed there. Keeping on this track, they pursued their way a short time in silence; but Benjie not caring for going on in that quiet, melancholy way, demanded his son to give a verse, after he himself had done so much to make their walk as cheerful as possible.

"I canna be fashed," returned Willie, in answer to his father's requests. "What's the guid o' us gaun routin' like a pair o' starvin' stots when they see turnips? forby, it's daft-like wark singin', when we ken the job we've by the hand; and tho' there's naebody to hear't, I dinna like it."

"It disna matter tae me what it looks like, if I want the sang," returned his father. "I want tae learn that thing ye've been drantin' an' croonin' at the last twa-three days, aye when I've happened tae see ye; sae ye'd better jist commence at ance."

"Weel, weel then," returned Willie; "jist be canny, an' I'll gang owre't slow, if ye want tae learn't. I hinna

got it a' by stamack yet, but ye's get what I hae o't;
so here it is:—

There was Nicol M'Nicker, who always was gay
When he'd blows for to give or to get in fair play,
Or a doer of evil to bring to his sense,
When he could in that way any friend recompense.
His grub he'd to pick up for nothing, or starve;
For no piece of money he e'er could preserve;
He seldom had much, but the little he got
All was floated away in the gill or the pot.
And he was the boy could use the shillelah—
Use it—use it—didn't refuse it—
He was the boy could use the shillelah."

"Prime! capital!" ejaculated his father; and taking up the "use it—use it," he began very loud to sing it himself.

"Wheesht! I say; wheesht!" said Willie; "what's that? I heard something cryin' owre there."

"Hoots, man! ye're aye hearin' ferlies," said his father, after he had stopped a moment and listened. "It wad be naething but some whustle-whaup we've raised, settin' up a yelloch as it flew awa: we'll never mind it;" and so saying, he again began—

"He was the boy to use the shillelah—
Use it—use it—didn't re"—

"Wheesht! there it's again, faither," said Willie, stopping him a second time.

"What the deevil are ye gaun on at, man?" inquired his father, not pleased at being so often interrupted. "It's jist what I've tauld ye."

"Stop a minute, an' listen then till ye hear't yersel', an' then ye'll ken better," said Willie; but as he spoke, the sound of "Hilloa, there! hilloa!" was heard pretty distinctly.

"Faith! but ye're richt after a', laddie," said his father. "It is somebody. Will we speak, or keep quiet? Wha will't be at this time o' the mornin'? It's *no the doctor*, at ony rate."

The sounds came a little nearer, and something like

"What are ye about there, Jim?" was now added to the hilloa.

"Tuts! I'll gie a bit roar, an' answer the puir sowl," said Benjie, giving a loud shout of 'Here.' We canna be sair beat ony way, when there's twa o' us, whatever it is." The reply was answered, and the sound came gradually nearer.

"If that's no somebody I ken cryin," said Willie, as the voice became more distinctly audible, "it's gie queer; but what ony body could be daeing here, I'm a wee at a loss to see."

"Govie coody! I dinna ken wha it'll be at a', or what they can be daein' here at this time, my man. I wish ou had held our tongues," said his father, after listening again with more attention. Both peered into the mist, to watch for the nearer approach of their respondent, who was still continuing to shout very loudly, and now seemed by his call to be close at hand.

"Och, hearty! an' if it's the shaap as ye're arter, ye naedn't be keeping so quiet, when its only a friend that's upon ye," cried the voice, as if disappointed at receiving no further reply. But Benjie and his son, if wishing before that they had kept silent, were after this salutation less inclined for speaking than ever. Both felt a little alarmed, and at a loss whether to take to their heels, or risk an interview; while Benjie inwardly cursed his noisy propensities, for having brought about the dilemma. It was, however, too late to run; for their friend of the mist came floundering through the heather to within a short distance of where they stood, and checked his pace as he seemed to discover he had been in error in supposing what he had given out.

"Och, sure and ye isn't Jim Dunnoven, tho' it's his fav'rite melody ye was a performin'," ejaculated their friend, as he cautiously advanced nearer. "But, be jabers!" he continued, "I might have know'd if it was the quality of the mutton ye was a testing, ye'd have kept yer song till arter yer breakfast. But the top of

the morning to ye, jintlemen ! I ax yer pardon if I've graived ye; and if that's not enough, ye can spake yer mind—I'm ready for ye."

So saying, he fearlessly stepped close beside them, and Willie's terror was nothing diminished at recognising his former acquaintance of the night, Larry O'Grunter, armed with his bludgeon, as if bent on some desperate deed, and looking, as Willie thought, twenty times more furious than on that occasion.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Dreams of the night, when darkness hangs around,
Oft show the future open and exposed;
And in their sober, silent warnings they
The darkest, secret deeds have oft disclosed.

WE will leave our friends on the moor for a little, and allow them time to recover from their fright, while we go back to Bramble-Green, to see how the folks left behind get on, and what passed there.

The injury to the young Artichoke kept it so long screaming and sobbing, that its mother had great difficulty in getting it pacified. But when she had succeeded in this, and made certain that its ribs and limbs were all sound, so much time had been taken up, and her somnolency so thoroughly dispelled, that she found she could not again fall asleep. So after rolling, tossing, and turning, till these sources of ease got exhausted and lost their efficiency, she felt that rising would be a relief, and though much earlier than she usually got astir, she arose accordingly. But as it happened that the officer and Charlie were to be there that morning for the cart, and that she would be needed to assist them to get the horse out, as her husband was not at hand, getting up a little sooner was what she would have required to do at any rate.

The absence of the doctor, coming as it did so shortly after the policeman's discovery, was set down by Mrs Artichoke as being little short of a direct judgment upon him, to be shown in a way that would, without doubt, serve as such an awe-striking caution to the whole parish, as would tend to keep down evil of every description.

for many a long day. Whether he had been thrown over his horse's head, and got his neck broken at once; or had been dragged by the stirrup, and kicked to death; or merely thrown, and got a leg or arm rendered unserviceable for life; or whether the horse had tumbled and rolled over him, and crushed him to death, were the thoughts to which Mrs Artichoke next turned. Before she had time to come to a conclusion as to which of these surmised dire calamities possessed the most claim to preference, or whether it was not more likely that he had been murdered, or evil of some other kind come over him, the policeman arrived, accompanied by the pestilential raven, Charlie Spades.

"Weel, lads, ye're soon at the road this mornin'," said Mrs Artichoke, as the two confronted her. "But there's ithers sooner at it than you, on jobs that dinna look owre braw."

"Lord sic! what's this noo?" said Watty, staring as if very much alarmed. "The deevil the like o' this ever I heard. There's aither somebody stealin' hens, or something gaun wrang perpetwal, for a' I can dae tae keep them richt."

"Is't ony ither bit thing in my way, ye mean?" eagerly inquired Charlie, shoving forward his oscillating appendage, and opening his eyes very wide. "There was fresh mowdie-hillocks up in my park yesterday, an' I thoct there wad be something or ither follow them."

"So ye hinna heard," returned Mrs Artichoke, "that the doctor was ca'd awa last nicht at a late hour, and that his horse cam hame its lane, a' splashed and clariet wi' clarts, and dirt, and bluid, and reekin' like tae tak lowe, and the bridle hingin' champit and broken among its feet? My guidman and Willie's awa tae seek him, and find oot what's come owre him."

"Dod, woman! that's terrible!" said Watty, stroking his chin very solemnly. "I dinna ken what's tae be dune, and the like o' me no at hame when a' that's gaun on; but I canna stop, and disappoint Humphrey. What

dae ye say about it?" he continued, addressing Charlie, and rubbing his chin more violently as his perplexity increased.

"Tho' the omens has been no that ill," returned Charlie, "I canna say I *a' thegither* like thae horse tum'les—it's sae seldom they turn oot worth the while. He's maybe jist mista'en the road in the mist, and been set wallop aff in the ditch, little the waur o't; but for a' that, I wad like tae hear hoo the thing stands, as it's hard tae say *hoo* it may turn."

"If it turns oot muckle guid after the dream I had last nicht, I'm gie far cheatit," rejoined Mrs Artichoke. "I dreamed I saw Mrs Curmuddie's dochter that ye're gaun awa after,—I thocht I saw her and the doctor beatin' carpets thegither. They had a lang set-tae at it; but she baith gied the last lick, and fauldit them up after they were dune: and ye ken what that looks like, I fancy?"

"That's a terrible-exterior'nar-curious dream!" said Watty, wiping with the sleeve of his coat the perspiration which had stood on his forehead at the very thought. "It is a most awfu' dream that, Mrs Archychok," he continued, replacing his hat with a trembling hand; "but I dinna *exackly* ken the readin' o't."

"It's surely something he needna be proud o', at ony rate," said Charlie, eyeing Mrs Artichoke, to observe the reception of his remark.

"If it's as easy for him to thole as it's for me to read what it is," said Mrs Artichoke, with considerable emphasis, "it'll be weel for him the noo whaurever he is, either in this world or the next ane. It reads jist this way, ye see:—The carpet meant *the matters that stood atween them*. And, ye understand, the awfu' fecht and threshin' the twa had at it, showed *hoo keen he was tae get the better o' the puir thing, and tae get clear o' a'*, tho' her body's cast up tae be a dumb witness against him. But the battle's no tae the strong! and after an awfu' set-tae, ye see she got the better o' him.

wi' givin' the last skelp at it, when he could dae nae mair. And then, ye see, she fauldit it a' up straught and even afore his face, *tae mak it a' clear against him that it cam richt her way.* Sae, I think, tho' it's a pity for him tae, that they're weel aff that's no in his shoon the noo, after the like o' this."

"The same here!" said Watty, drawing a long hoarse sigh. "Ye've made the thing as clear's a new-polished handcuff. I'm perfet vext tae be oot the road, but there's nae help for't."

"It's really a bonny, clear readin' o' the thing as ever I heard in my days," said Charlie, the rate of his vibrations increasing with the interest of the subject. "I wadna gie a threed oot the tassil o' the auld mort-claith for his chance after't; and tho' a' the parish gaed against it, it wad mak as little change on me as the skelp o' a pick wad dae to the road on a frosty mornin'. Lord! I'm sae sure o't that, I've a guid mind to gae wa' aboot it mysel'."

"If ye'll tak my advice," said Watty, looking a little displeased at this proposition, "ye'll keep yer word, and gae whaur the prospeck's looking as brisk's a neep-stealer let aff wi' ten days, when he expeckit twenty; and whaur ye wad been gled to gaen if there had been naething else. But ye'll see wha I tell next time I've ony jobby o' the kind by the hand."

"Weel, I own it's no richt to gae past folk's freends," said Charlie, looking as if he already did feel all the disappointment and bad consequences it could be possible for Watty's hint to produce; "but I dinna really see its a' *thegither* needfu' for baith o' us to be gaun, when its takin' me awa frae my ain interest."

"Ye 'dinna see it's needfu'!" said Watty, attempting to mix up a little authority into his speech, and beginning to look sour, "ye 'dinna see it's needfu'!" My mannie, I'll maybe get the mends o' ye a way ye're no thinkin'! and ye'll find oot there was 'need' syne. Ye ken I dinna exackly like bein' aside thae things

we're gaun for, an' it's deevilish shabby o' ye to draw back-spangs that way, when it's no to sair ye muckle less when ye gae wi' me."

"Ay, man!" said Charlie, as if he pitied his friend's want of courage; "if I had just as mony o' them as I could find room to plant in my garden, I wad think I was weel aff, and no trouble neither you nor them wi' any 'likes' or 'dislikes' about it."

"Pity me, man!" said Mrs Artichoke, quite shocked at this remark, "are ye no wae to speak that hard-hearted gaet about yer fellow-craters? I never thocht ye sic a unfeelin' monster!"

"'Unfeelin' monster'! 'unfeelin' monster'! Lord bless ye! what has hiz folk to dae wi' feelin' or murnin' when it's jist in the way of our business?" said Charlie, quite unmoved. "I'm gie sure ye wadna like to lie kickin' and hashin' aboot yersel' ance yer braith was oot, an' naebody to see to ye gettin' dacent buried, or tak ony care o' ye when ye can tak nae care o' yersel' nae langer. I'm thinkin' if it cam to that, ye wad change yer mind, and be the first to wish that Charlie Spades wad come and mak ye a' richt."

"Are ye gaun or no gaun, then?" inquired Watty. "Ye can please yersel'; but you'll rue't if ye dinna, that's a'."

"The fack is, I canna exackly mak up my mind," said Charlie, evidently perplexed a good deal.

"I needna mind takin' the cart wi' me then, for I see he's no gaun," said Watty, reading in Charlie's hesitation a reply in the negative. "I'll jist gang down as I've promised; an' if it's as we're thinkin', and she's far-gane, I've nae doot it'll can be managed to get her buried there a' richt."

"Lord bless me! that'll be heart-rendin' for her puir mother a' thegither if ye gang an' dae that," said Mrs Artichoke, quite distressed at the thoughts of such an occurrence. "Ye maunna dae that, Mr Baton! It'll be waur nor the loss o' her dochter a thoosand times

owre, for Mrs Curmuddie to hae the thoct that her bairn was buried sae far frae hame!"

"There'll be nane o' *my* folk get leave to come through ither hands aither, as lang's I'm here to hinder't," said Charlie. "It wad be a bonnie like thing to dae that, Mrs Archychok. The ither things may hing as they grow; we'll get the beast put in the hurley, and be gaun. I'll stick to my promise, at ony rate; and tho' I've been a wee lang wi't, like the wrights when it's a puir chestin', we'll hae to be content, and let by-gaens be by-gaens."

This sensible and appropriate conclusion went its full way with Watty, and perfectly softened anything disagreeable that had been taking the place of his better feelings; so they set about harnessing the pony with all expedition, and were shortly on their way as good friends as they had ever been,—the little difference of opinion that had caused them to disagree being temporarily overlooked, if not quite forgotten.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Let sober grief alane declare
Our fond anxiety and care,
Nor let the undertakers be
The only waefu' friends we see.
Fergusson.

"PUIR body, Mrs Curmuddie!" said Mrs Artichoke to herself, when the cart left; "I think it'll be naething but richt, when she's in the middle o' her affliction, to let her ken what's ta'en place. It'll aye be a bit slice o' comfort, tho' ever sae cauld, for her to hae the consolation o' kennin' that them wha's been the cause o' bringin' ill on her's, hasna been let gang unpunished. I daresay she'll be oot o' her bed, tho' it's gie sune; but if she shouldna, it canna be pittin' her sair aboot when I hae this errant to tak me there; so I'll just dae as I say."

Mrs Artichoke accordingly went off, and on reaching the habitation of her friend, she found her busily occupied at the washing-tub; but on telling what had brought her up, Mrs Curmuddie suspended her occupation, wiped the froth from her arms, and was all attention in an instant.

"That's something I was hardly ettlin' to hear," said Mrs Curmuddie, after the principal details of the dream had been given out; "but I nicht guessed something or ither wad be up, if I had ta'en ony thocht; for ane o' thae big moths pat oot my can'le last nicht, and it wadna blaw in again."

"Ay, but it's lichted at the *ither end*, ye see!" said Mrs Artichoke. "And I like yer can'le a' the better

o' no blawin' in after my dream; for it shows that she *keepit* the upper hand when she *got it*. The can'le gaun oot in your house bodes *you* nae ill;—it jist lets ye see hoo it stands wi' *them it's been meant for*."

"Hae ye made ony readin' o' yer dream?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie, apparently affected a little, though possessed of considerable nerve, and fitted in no ordinary degree for standing trials of the severest kind.

"O yes," returned Mrs Artichoke, "I've gien't a bit read; but what do ye sae tae it yersel'!"

"Did ye say the faulds cam *even* thegither, Mrs Archychok? or did the ane flap past the ither a bit, that ye noticed?" inquired Mrs Curmuddie, after considering a moment to make up her verdict.

"Square and even, as far's I could see," returned Mrs Artichoke; "for I tried to notice that very partickler, and I think I saw her pass her hand along the ends to mak it a' alike."

"*That's* what I'm feared for, Mrs Archychok," said Mrs Curmuddie. "That doesna mak her oot *either better or waur than he was*. I doot there was naen o' them unco like to mend the ither; but it jist lets us see that nane e'er gied wi' the swurd but they got wi' the scabbart. But d'ye mind onything o' the colourin' o' the carpet at a' ? and was the sticks *peel'd*, or had they their *bark* on them ?"

"Weel—I—didna—pay *muckle* heed to the colourin' o' the carpet," said Mrs Artichoke, consulting her recollection; "but, if I'm no mista'en, it was sort o' dark sprains through a kind o' green colour; an' I *dinna think* the whauns *was* peel'd."

"Darker and mair dismal than ever," said Mrs Curmuddie, as her feelings seemed to be giving way. "The puir thing's aye a body's ain, an' for a' her fallin's and short-comin's, a body canna but be wae for her tae. The *green* carpet, Mrs Archychok, *is the green divot*; and ye ken what the *sprains is*, *that'll sune hide a' frae the world for ever!* As the switches *wasna* peel'd, we

needna look ever to find oot *wha was maist i' the fault*, or *ony mair about it*. But baith you and me learned langsyne to be content wi' the day o' sma' things, and it's aye matter o' thankfu'ness to see them ta'en out o' the world that wadna gie ithers peace to stop in't."

"It's an unco sair bide for ye ony way, puir body, to hae yer feelin's pou'd up by the roots, and yersel' torter'd that gaet," said Mrs Artichoke, speaking very compassionately. "Houkin' up a' yer auld grief, and plantin't owre again, is waur than meetin' new thing that the extent o's no kenn'd."

"A mother's feelin's, Mrs Archychoke, nane kens but themselfs," said Mrs Curmuddie, in a forlorn tone, though not apparently very much overcome. "But we've been helpit through a guid deal, an' maun try to keep up as muckle as we can, tho' it's no easy."

"It's weel wi' you," returned Mrs Artichoke, "that ye've as muckle sense as ken grumlin' and roarin' serves nae end wi' thae things; but it'll be an unco handfu' if they bring hame the droukit corp on ye, just as they get it!"

"O Lord bless ye, no! no! That wadna dae!" said Mrs Curmuddie. "They winna do that ava. Charlie will see to gettin' everything richt afore they win this length. I've haen a kind offer or twa to come to the chestin'; but they'll no be needit. My word, folk ne'er ken wha their freends is till they meet wi' afflictions! Even Mrs Corphoodie, puir body, cam hirplin' doun, for as late and wat's it was, and tho' she was bad wi' the cauld, to volunteer to help me wi' the sweelin' if it was needit. I took it doubly kind o' her, tae; for there's aye a groat or some sma' thing stannin' o' her aughteen pence for streekin' my guidman, tho' she's no been a' thegither ill paid ae way an' anither."

"Kindness is aye kindness, come aff what airt it will," said Mrs Artichoke. "I wad been unco gled mysel' to offered to help ye wi' onything ye micht needit; but I

ne'er heard tell o't till Watty cam doun aboot the horse last nicht, and ye see I'm here as soon's I could."

"Dinna think *me* ane o' the ungratefu' folk that neither ken a guid turn when it's dune them, nor minds them that daes't," said Mrs Curmuddie, looking hurt at the very thought of such an idea existing. "I ken *wha's* my freends; and *you're* *ane* o' them, Mrs Archy-chok—ay, and *ane* I wadna gie for *two* o' a heap o' them."

"I dinna deserve a' that aither," said Mrs Artichoke, trying to look very modest under such excessive flattery. "But tae tell ye the truth, I had aye a extra warm side tae ye and a' yours, and I ken it wasna thrown awa."

"I ken that richt weel," returned Mrs Curmuddie. "But what dae ye really think's tae be the upshot o' this that's come owre Dr Golloch?" she continued, getting tired of dwelling so long on her own matters. "If he's clean gane, as looks like, it'll mak a gie terrivee again. I'm sure, it's been weel ordered, if it's sae that he's dee'd single, no tae hae been leavin' his wife ahint him! I'm thinkin' the hizzie 'ill no rue she's had naething tae dae wi' him, when she hears o' this, at ony rate; but a' thing's for the best, if folk could only think it."

"Sae far as a' thing looks as yet," said Mrs Artichoke, "there's no muckle room tae come and gang on in his chance o' onything guid, after everything's sae awfu' clear against him; and tho' I was gie far gaen mysel', I wadna be keen o' rinnin' chance o' his shoon for better fittin'."

"Will he hae left mony tae murn him, dae ye think nae?" again inquired Mrs Curmuddie, looking as if she might be induced to become one of the number in the event of a scarcity. "If he's onything tae leave, plenty o' folk that he maybe ne'er seen atween the een afore will be gled tae claim close kin, and join the ootcry. Dae ye think his purse wad be ane that needed stoot

steeks tae keep its sides in, or wad he maybe hae enough tae dae?"

"There's ae thing, he wasna sweer'd wi' what he had, at ony rate, sae far as e'er I heard tell o'," returned Mrs Artichoke. "That was aye ae clear spat amang his sooty anes. He was ne'er ahint wi' settlin' his 'count for greens and neeps, and things o' the kind, and that's what I canna say o' a' them that's left ahint him; and it'll throw puir Willie oot o' bread, whaur he was sae comfortable;—thae things maks hiz vext, Mrs Curmuddie."

"Folk *has* tae pit up wi' a heap in this world, tho'," said Mrs Curmuddie, shaking her head. "I ne'er thoct I could stood the half till I was obleeg'd; but I'm no what I was afore I had sae muckle tae ding me stoopit. They're weel, weel aff, Mrs Archychok, that can tak things easy; for it's the best way, if a body could dae't."

"Them that gets the heaviest dunt, dinna aye cry sairest oot aither," said Mrs Artichoke, trying to bring her own look to serve as an illustration. "Ye ken the biggest splashin' is aye set up i' the shalley places; and that the stane aye gangs farast down, and is warst tae tak oot again, the deeper the bottom is."

"That's true; I ne'er like tae see owre much din set up aboot aither ae thing or anither," replied Mrs Curmuddie. "What folk hae tae bear, there's nae help for; but I'm sort o' feared tae look forrit tae what's comin', for a'!"

"I'll try tae look up aside ye, if ye'll no be thinkin' me owre muckle bather, or forcin' mysel' on ye whan ye wad maybe rather want me tae stay awa," said Mrs Artichoke, with an immense show of candour.

"I wad surely be bauld tae compleen, and hae unco little tae grumble at," said Mrs Curmuddie, "if I could really tak on me tae treat *you* that way. My certie! I'm no her that I've aye been, if I wadna valie yer kindness. It's a bonnie story, to let the like o' that

come oot your mouth, when ye ken richt weel I've few noo, forby yersel', that wad gie a roosty tacket for me, or care what cam owre me. Never speak o' troublin' me, Mrs Archychok; ye can dae a heap, but that's what ye couldna manage."

"Then ye may luppin tae see me back by the time they get hame, if things turn oot as we've laid our account for; so I'll bid ye guid mornin' till then," said Mrs Artichoke, and she left to retrace her steps home.

CHAPTER XXX.

They placed reliance on his speech,
And all that he narrated;
Well plessed were they, and never thought,
Could it be fabricated?

WE must now return to our two friends whom we left standing on the moor, after being joined by Larry O'Grunter, and keep up with them in their proceedings, as they must not be altogether neglected, though we were obliged to leave them for a little. Larry was the first to break silence on recognising Willie, after getting close to him, and his opening sentence was—

"Och, sowl of ye! an' I didn't think I'd enjoy a sight of ye so far from home, when ye looked so faer'd of the night. But I'm glad I've seen you," he continued, "if it's only for knowin' that the baste's got back; and I hope he'd 'ave the sense to take care of himself when he had just the saddle to carry wid him alone."

This went greatly to reduce the terror of Willie, as he had not been expecting such a salute; and he boldly inquired, "What has come over the doctor?"

"Och! sure he's all safe—snug as a bug in a rug," replied Larry. "I've been over the moss wid him, to put him right on the road; and I'd rather have carried him myself all the way, or wheeled him round in my barrow, than seen the sole o' his honour's phut wet. Be jabers! he's brought me a son as there never was the like of at the work before since my last one, and all for nothing too! and he's to be back to see if my darlint goes well and hearty. Isn't *that* a jintleman for you?"

"The horse just ran off then, I fancy," said Willie, now almost recovered from his fears.

"Och! sowl if he didn't; but he was let away," returned Larry; "and it's well for the spalpeen that did it that his grandfather's coat fitted aisy, or he wouldn't have bolted through the sleeve so clae. He got into the barrel beside Mother M'Groanachie's pig, or I'd have murdered him. I tried to poker the varmint out, but Mother M'Groanachie heard her baste squaelin', and sent out her lodger, Dominique M'Chokpatrick, to see what was the matter wid it. When Dominique seen the sarpint had took to purtection so nat'ral, he would have me leave him alone; so I did it *then*, to oblige Dominique;—he's *one* of the best shillelah boys on the Work, and *we* don't fight. But, be jabers!" he continued, "he gets enough of it yet once I've the luck to catch him." So saying, he threw himself into a fighting attitude, and showed, by his gestures and the twirling of his stick, the little mercy he intended to show the unlucky urchin.

"It's jist a deevil o' a blessin' we were takin' our bit sang then," said Benjie, now satisfied that he might join the conversation without risk; "it'll save us plasterin' through this infernal place ony farer. I'm gled things are nae waur; for I hardly thocht to be so lucky."

"Yer faer sits aisy then, jewel," said Larry, "if ye sing so chaerful when yer graived, and looking for one ye expect to find wid his life far from his body. But ye was p'raps making ready for his wake?"

"O, we're no jist sae bad as that aither, man," returned Benjie, trying to blend a little feeling with his tone; "but, ye ken,

We should never be dowie,
As lang's we ken Jamie Cowie!

and forby that, singin' the bit verse wad dune nae ill, tho' he had been waur than has turned oot. I'm no ane that cares for makin' muckle molligrant, till I've

something worth while tae mak murn for, and I only wanted tae keep cheerie as lang's I could; sae I dinna think there's ony need for compleenin' aboot our bit drant after a' the guid it's dune us."

"Och! the devil a bit of it," said Larry. "If it had been myself, I'd p'raps have been whistling into the bargain. I don't like none of the slow, silent work, when it's not matter of naed."

"Ay, man! if ye're a chap o' that kind," said Benjie, "I'll tak a bit verse frae ye, if ye like. What dae ye say?"

"Och! sure and I haven't said I won't," replied Larry. "I'll exchange a melody wid ye, as ye saem good at it. What will ye have?"

"Ye kenn'd that ane I was tryin' when ye cam on us, I think. What dae ye say tae it?" returned Benjie.

"The 'Blue Rat' is a good song, sure," returned Larry. "I know it; but it's not mine, though I sometimes sing it too. But I'll give you *my* melody in the maentime."

So saying, Larry tucked up his trousers another turn, crushed his hat firmer on his head, took his shillelah by the middle, gave a short turn round, and struck down a thistle or two that were in his way, when, bidding Benjie sit down on a knoll at hand, he gave a howl by way of introduction, brandished his stick, and began as follows:—

O the county of Clare is the county for sport,—
 'Tis the county for fights and rare things of the sort.
 I sorry feel for them who never were there,
 And shared in the fun of the county of Clare.

Sure that mighty feat now has often been sung,
 Which was done by wee Billy, who owns the big rung,
 When he broke the fat nose of Polly Brown's brother,
 For leaving his sister and taking another!

For Billy would not see his sister neglected,
 When Mike Brown had promised, and they had expected;
 But even *that* breach it might pardoned have been,
 Had Mike not gone courting wee Billy's colleen!

But before he knew this, his poor sister's complaint
Made him vow for her tears he'd make Mike to repent;
But when he found out he was touched at the core,
He raged with great fury, he curs'd, and he swore.

He wished in his anger to die before Lent,
And invoked all the curses of Virgin and Saint—
Hop'd they'd treat him with scorn for the rest of his life,
From the day Mike should take Miss M'Phratie to wife.

But somehow or other he heard Mike was down
At a neighbouring city, to purchase a gown;
So Billy swore out that he'd pay for it dear,
Before Miss M'Phratie should get it to wear.

So determined at once for to seize on his prey,
He grasped his shillelah and went on his way,
And arrived at the spot ere the sun had gone down,
Where he thought Mike would pass on his way back from town.

Poor unfortunate Mike! with his wares on his back,
Came unconscious that Billy was there to attack,
Till he sprung out upon him with yells that did pierce
To the depths of the moss, they were uttered so fierce!

But Mike gathered courage, and stuck to his ground,
Though he learned for the first time his match he had found;
Billy left him for dead in the Moss of Mochrone,
With his nose and his cheek both laid bare to the bone!

"Ah! snappin'! snappin'! stunnin'! famous!" said
Benjie, in ecstasies as Larry gave the last sweep with
his ponderous staff. "Man, that's deevilish prime!
Ye dinna look like's ye could turn them aff sae fine.
I never saw the rung brocht in sae handy! Ye can
dae't!"

"Well sure, that's what's said," replied Larry, a little
flattered, as he wiped his face on the sleeve of his coat.
"We'll give ye the pleasure of us listening to yours
now, my broth."

"What'll I sing?" said Benjie. "Will I sing the
'Calve's Ghost,' 'The Puggie's Belly-Band,' 'Scrape the
Kail-Runt, Peggy,' 'The Auld Mutch Croun,' 'The
New-Year's Sweetie-Scone,' 'Rattle Bunker,' or what?"

"That one! that one! Shove along with it, hearty!
That's the boy!" said Larry.

"Here she is, then," said Benjie; and he thus began:—

Puir Felix Footer, noo nae mair,
When Felix was a younker,
He hired a horse, and gaed to see
His sweetheart, Rattle Bunker.

When Felix neared his lover's door,
His hunger knawed like canker;
But sune his appetite was stayed
By his dear Rattle Bunker.

She gied him whisky with his bread,
With which he good health drunk her;
And in return, when he had done,
He kissed his Rattle Bunker.

His time was short, the road was lang—
He scarce had time to thank her;
So Felix cried aloud, and bade,
Adieu to Rattle Bunker.

As Felix kissed her frae his steed,
Which was an awfu' funker,
The wilyart beast did lift its leg,
And fell'd puir Rattle Bunker.

Then Felix grieved, and wi' a stick
He struck it owre the hunker;
Then got an axe, and felled it dead,
For killin' Rattle Bunker.

Puir Felix dwined for twa-three weeks,
When in the grave they sunk her,
And had nae wish but to be laid
Beside his Rattle Bunker.

He wadna crack, nor drink, nor smoke,
But wander'd in his stunker,
Till Felix dee'd, who killed the horse,
Which killed his Rattle Bunker.

A woodman brocht him hame ae nicht
Dead, swingin' on a janker,
Frae whaur he had lain down and dee'd
For love o' Rattle Bunker.

"Macgillicuddy's Reeks! she's a lofty one! She's a beauty, bedad!" grinned Larry, evidently greatly delighted at Benjie's performance. "Though it's time I

was gone, to be back at the start, I'll give you the 'Blue Rat' too."

So saying, he fell into his attitudes as before, and went on with the song Willie had begun a verse of a little time before:—

There was Nicol M'Nicker, who always was gay
When he'd blows for to give or to get in fair play,
Or a doer of evil to bring to his sense,
When he could in that way any friend recompense.
His grub he'd to pick up for nothing, or starve;
For no piece of money he e'er could preserve;
He seldom had much, but the little he got
All was floated away in the gill or the pot.
And he was the boy could use the shillelah—
Use it—use it—didn't refuse it—
He was the boy could use the shillelah.

One day he was sitting with Mrs O'Flinn,
Who kept the "Blue Rat," as was called her shubeen.
He had just got the worth of his very last groat,
And drained the last dregs of the old pewter-pot,
When the amiable partner of Mrs O'Flinn
Thought he'd give her a scold for a fault she'd been in,
When quickly from this a smart quarrel arose,
And from words pretty sharp it soon bloomed into blows.
Nicol grasped his shillelah, quite pleased at the sight,
And eagerly watched every turn of the fight,
Till his hand grew so itchy, he could not delay
Helping Mrs O'Flinn in the worst of the fray.
And he was the boy could use the shillelah—
Use it—use it—didn't refuse it—
He was the boy could use the shillelah.

But woe to poor Nicol! the moment he rose,
To save Mrs O'Flinn from her husband's cruel blows,
Ere he time got to show the intentions he had,
She had turned on him too like a fury gone mad!
Both stuck to poor Nicol, and gave him far more
Than he'd got in his whole life of fighting before.
He soon was content with his share of the fray,
And as quick as he could he slipped out of the way.
He swore if again he should e'er hear a wife,
'Neath the blows of her husband, cry "Murther" for life,
He would leave her to fight him, and rescue herself,
Ere he'd risk such a shower falling down on himself.
Though he was a boy could use the shillelah—
Use it—use it—then he'd refuse it—
Though he was a boy could use the shillelah.

"Ay, dyse't, Willie, man! if ye could tip it aff

like that," said Benjie, scratching his head like to tear his nightcap to pieces. "That's singin' and a-half, Willie."

"We must tug out and away, though," said Larry. "I must lave ye, hearties. What road will ye take?"

"I could stop as lang's ye like at this rate," said Benjie. "But I fancy sin' we've got tell o' what we cam for, and ye're obleeg'd tae leave us, we may as weel tak the road again; for I see nae use o' sittin' dinlin' and grouzin' here like craws in the mist ony langer; sae we'll jist strike through at the nearest, I suppose."

"If ye know the way, it's both shorter and worse nor the other," said Larry. "But if ye just step round a small bit farther wid me, ye'll get the fair run of the path, as it goes direct across the heather."

"We wadna be sae bad, if it wasna that confounded mist," said Benjie. "It's makin' my throat risp like a fiddle-bow that wants rosit. But I think, for a' that, we'll be able tae manage the short-cut gie weel if we was ance on't; at least, I use tae kenn'd, and hae gane ow'r'd as often's there's teeth in my head; for I hinna quite sich a strong crap o' them as I had afore thae doctor chaps began guddlin' amang them wi' their nippers."

"I'll put ye upon the right road, at any rate," said Larry, "if ye can keep it. As the morning gets on, ye'll see better; but the mist may clae away."

"I dinna think I'm quite sich a donnart iddiwurt as no tae mind the way aither," returned Benjie; "for mony a backfu o' peats I used tae wheech across't when I was a bit laddie; but tae mak sure o' the thing, we'll stap alang tae whaur ye say."

"Ye naedn't mind a burthenin' yer mim'ry wid any little thing ye heard me say by mistake, and which didn't concern ye," said Larry, as they walked along. "It's only a thrifle; but it's ould enough, and its growth should be stopped;—you understand?"

"I'm no exackly sure," returned Benjie, his flesh

beginning to creep a little; "but if it's yer bairn's growth yer gaun tae stop, I'd advise ye tae leav'd tae tak its swing, and hae nae hand in helpin't awa."

"And, by the powers, do you think as I'd murder my child, ye barbarous baste?" roared Larry, in a voice that started Benjie so much as nearly to force the hairs of his head through his nightcap. "By the powers! an' the gibbet never was made that will swing it."

"Bless me! there's some mistak," said Willie. "He naither spoke o' hangin' you nor it. He meant ye to leave't for a nat'ral death. But I dinna think it was about it ye was speakin';—tho' I hardly understood ye a' thegither aither."

"Och, sowl! an' I just maen that small thing about the grass-porkers," said Larry, getting back to his old tone again. "What I cried about the shaap, when yer melody decaived me."

"O! the grasshapper-warblers! *I* understand ye!" said Benjie, clapping his hand on his mouth, and giving a fair imitation of the cry of the animal. "I see the thing. A's richt;—a nod's as guid's a wink to a blind horse."

"By the powers! an' ye do the music uncommon nat'ral," said Larry, grinning; "and I shouldn't wonder but ye've p'raps seen a lamb mistake it for its mother's, and taken charge of it in its difficulties."

"O, losh no!" said Benjie. "I never exackly did that; but I've seen me whyles chip a hen when they've been scrapin' my ingan-beds, and said naething about it; for there's no muckle damages to be got for onything they waste, unless theirsels. But I've never dune muckle in the way wi' onything else; and yer freend's be nane the waur o' me, dae what he likes, for I naither wad ken him by sicht, no yet by name again."

"Well, ye naedn't throuble remimb'ring," said Larry. "I'm sartin it's all tight and secure."

They had now got round with their friend to the place he had indicated; and after he had given sundry

suggestions and directions about the road, he shook both by the hand so affectionately that they had difficulty in refraining from yelling outright; and bidding them good morning, and wishing them safely through their journey, he disappeared into the mist.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The path that ran across the heath
Had many a turn and winding,
And whyles the traveller his way
Had difficulty finding.
But oft when prospects do look dark,
They're seen just to the surface;
And what appears against us most,
Comes best to suit our purpose.

BENJIE taking the lead as guide, they turned off at an angle through the blackened remains of the burned heather, which cracked and crisped beneath their feet as they pursued their course. The lapwings and plovers, started at their approach, rose with bewildered flight, and uttering their plaintive calls, wheeled into the mist, in search of more undisturbed resting-places.

The crowing of the moorcocks, and the clucking responses of their mates, resounded on all sides; and as the travellers entered the standing heather and encroached on their territory, they rose here and there, and took wing with an angry ill-natured *whirr*.

"What a thoosand pities we hinna a gun wi' us, Willie!" said old Artichoke, as two or three grouse rose very near them. "We micht hae ca'd the sowl oot some o' thae roarin' deevils. They mak a fine mark in a day like this; for the mist maks them look as big as paecocks. But it's no like lettin' a shot play reenge among the blackies and sprugs when they're pickin' the berries, when ye begin wi' thae chaps. It wad need a heavier dose than sparrow-hail to gang through thae thick-skinned beggars. There they go again;—but we'll be at the march-dyke sune, and get oot o' the road

o' their whirrin' and bickin'. We maun hae the Gamie gien a deevil o' a raggin' for lettin' sae mony o' them gang aboot roarin' and batherin' folk. He's surely keepin' them awfu' carefu' this year, and no killin' mony."

"They're surely terrible fond o' cryin', for they're gaun through a dreadfu' lot o't," said Willie. "It wad be weel if they had something else to dae to keep themsel's quiet."

"We'll gie them a bit touch o' our music, to keep them company," said Benjie. "I'll try a bit verse o' the Calve's Ghost. I was thinkin' aboot it when that gommerral began cryin' on us. Sae here's at her:—

There was auld Widow Dowie, wha leaved in the croft,
She was plagued wi' the cauld and a sair hoast;
Haein' naebody near but a man in the loft,
She was fear'd every nicht wi' a calve's ghost.

It cam every nicht when she'd gaen tae her rest,
And she shook and held fast by the bed-post.
It grunted and grained as it gaed round the house,
And she couldna get peace for the calve's ghost.

She spoke to the ploughman, and asked his advice;
He was free, and did gie it at nae cost.
He thocht if she took him, her husband to be,
She wad be nae mair plagued wi' the calve's ghost.

She pretended tae think it was nonsense he spoke;
But ere Winter cam in, wi' his cauld frost,
She married the ploughman. It had been nae joke!
For ne'er after that cam the calve's ghost.

"Come awa wi' something, man; yer a most awfu' skeigh, sleepy fallow," said Benjie, after he had gone through the "Calve's Ghost" without any remark passing from his son.

"Will't be lang or we get tae the road?" said Willie, without minding his father's word of encouragement to bring forward his musical acquirements.

"Dod, man! tae hear a fallow like you grumphin' aboot the road a'ready! it's perfet waesome!" returned his father. "But if it's tae cheer ye, we'll be at the

march-dyke sune. I thocht we'd been aboot at it by this time; but we canna be sair beat ony way; we maun come tae something sune."

"Weel, I wish tae peace we were at it; for I'm tired gaun slaigerin' through a place like this a' mornin'," said Willie.

"Jist keep on a wee gliff," returned his father. "The dyke canna be far awa noo. Ye ken ye've the road tae gang, and ye'll no shorten't wi' grumlin'."

"Is that no something like a dyke owre there?" said Willie, pointing to a dark line that ran in the direction they were walking.

"There's deel a doots but it's a dyke," returned his father, diverging towards it; "but hoo in a' the world dis it happen tae be rinnin' along noo, when it aye ran across afore?"

"We maun jist hae stitter'd aff the straught somehow or ither," said Willie.

"Tuts! I see hoo it is," said Benjie, as he approached; "we've been haudin' owre far up, and hae gaen very near past it; for here's the end o't. We'll jist gang down the dykeside a wee bit, and then cross owre."

They turned round the corner, and went down the side of the dyke; and as they walked on, old Artichoke was very loud in applauding his own skill in finding the way so exactly across the moor. But his declamation suddenly dropped, and he put on a very blank look, as another corner with another dyke running a different direction presented itself.

"Weel, tae tell the truth," he ejaculated, "this coves the gowan a'thegither. The deel a bit if ever I saw the like o't. I dinna ken what kind o' place this is at a', unless it's some sheep-bught, or thing o' that kind. It beats me tae ken what bit o' the moor we're in noo, that's the plain truth. That Irish bleck surely wadna set us wrang?"

"I'm sure I dinna ken," said Willie; "but I'm perfet tired trampin' up and down here. It wad hae been

better had we jist gaen back by the round-about way. What are we tae dae noo?"

"The best thing will aither be tae gang the airt our place lies in, or gae back the road we cam," replied Benjie; "but I'm no a'thegither sure o' nane o' them after this mishapper."

"We had as weel keep the airt we were gaun, at ony rate," said Willie; "for I dinna think we've gaen far oot the straught o' whaur we startit frae."

"Weel, we may jist be gaun again, then," said Benjie. "It's a pity we've neither a dram nor a licht tae the pipe, for a smoke wad help us owre the heather."

It was now good day-light; but the mist still obscured everything, except for a very short way round; and they stammered on, uncertain where they were going, till they came to a burn which checked their onward progress,—not that there was any difficulty in crossing it, but because they thought it might afford some clue to their whereabouts.

"By George! Willie, this is waur and waur," said his father, looking with a puzzled air at the stream. "I thocht I had seen the maist o' the waters hereawa; but here's a burn rinnin' a different airt frae ony o' the ithers in this part o' the country."

"Ye ken I can say naething aboot it," said Willie; "for I've nae thocht at e' aither whaur we are, or what way tae tak."

"We'll gang owre the water, and richt on then, I think," said Benjie; "for we're as weel gaun as stannin'; and if we want hame, we maun gang and look for't, for it winna come and look for us. But I'll hae a bit mouthfu', drumlie and a' as it is, for my clay's most awfu' not moist. If we'd been near ony gate, I wad haen ye tae rin the cutter."

He lay down on his knees, and took a mouthful or two; and as he rose, he said very solemnly, "Ay, man, it's a nice recuration a dram. It wad improve the like o' that awfu'!"

They then crossed over to the other side, and pursued their way as before.

The ground over which they were now passing had the appearance of having been under the hands of agriculturists at some former period. With the exception of a whin bush now and then, and an occasional tuft of heather, it was covered with grass and turf; and both Willie and his father pronounced it to be to all appearance sheep pasture, and agreed that they were now fairly on the right way, though the burn had been inclining them to think otherwise.

The former supposition was soon verified. As they advanced, three or four sheep rose up, and after gazing with a distrustful look at the intruders, trotted out of the way, to seek other quarters, uttering a short, dissatisfied cry as they ran. These appeared to have been the outposts of the flock that had been disturbed, for the travellers were almost immediately passing through among a comparatively large number, which, in eagerness to get out of the way of the trespassers on their privacy, rushed bleating and crying in every direction.

"Is there mony sheep round about the Brummel, Willie?" inquired Benjie of his son. "I ken naeboddy that has onything like as mony, or it's no lang since they've gotten them."

"O plenty," he replied; "but they're maistly a' at the ither side. I dinna think there's as mony at the side next the airt we should be on. But here's something like a road to somegaet or ither," he continued, as they came upon a track broader and more beaten than the most of the others they had seen; "do ye think we should gang alang it, and see?"

"O, I'm easy what we dae noo," replied Benjie. "It can mak unco little difference. But, wheesht! there's something like a dog gullerin'. Will that be the Gamie, or the shepherd? I'll gie him a whistle, and bring him."

He whistled, and the bark was distinctly repeated in

answer, and continued nearer—nearer, and a collie dog came running to them, and then went backwards, barking and wagging his tail.

"Come in, and lie down, Rover," cried a voice from some short distance ahead of them; and presently the outline of a house appeared, and grew more distinct as they approached. Rover meanwhile changed his voice into a kind of patronizing growl, and advanced a little closer, to try whether his olfactory nerves could assist him in recognising the visitors.

"What's yer wull?" inquired a woman who stood a short way in front of the door, with her neck extended and gazing eagerly at our friends as they emerged from the mist into view.

"We want you to tell us our way, for we're rather aff the scent o't," replied Benjie.

"Ow-wye," she replied, after taking a very liberal stare at the two, and apparently making a mental inventory of the colours in Benjie's head-dress. "I'll tell Mawcum to speak wi' ye himsel';—no to say ye're exactly like starvagin' ne'er-do-weels aither; but I dinna like ony o' yer wanderin' clanjamfrey at a'. I think they're owre het at hame that come rakin' sae sune in a day o' this kind, and sae far as ye look like's ye're frae."

Finishing her sentence, she disappeared, and a man, evidently "Mawcum," in the garb of a shepherd, came out, and as the woman had done, put the question of "What's yer wull?"

"Can ye pit us on the road to Brummel-Green?" said Benjie, "or tell's whaur it is?"

"If ye've to be there to yer breakfast," returned the shepherd, "ye've a lang road afore ye, and ye'll hae a toom wame by the time ye're there."

"Whaur the deevil are we, if ye had yer wull?" said Benjie. "We surely canna be awfu' far aff the straucht."

"'Far aff the straicht'!" reiterated the shepherd;

"'far aff the straicht'! Ye axed the road to Brummel-Greens, did'n ye? Weel, ye're jist aboot the far end o' Blawdreary, gin that's to mak ye 'far aff the straicht' or no."

"If that's the way o't," replied Benjie, "the sooner we tak the road the better. But we're little dafter or wiser frae a' ye've said; sae ye'll maybe tell's the road to tak, for I'm no exackly sure o't."

"Ow, I'll dae that," replied the shepherd, looking a little consequential; "I ken maist o' the roads owre the place here. If ye tak that ane," he said, pointing in a certain direction, "ye'll be aff yer eggs a'thegither; if ye gang yon way, ye'll no dae at a'; if ye gang this way, ye'll be awa to the park a'thegither; if ye gang that way, ye'll be waur than ever; if ye gang yon way, ye'll be awa seekin' shearin'; and if ye gang owre there, ye'll be farer wrang than ever ye was richt."

"Lord, man! ye wad save yersel' an awfu' trouble if ye wad jist say the road we was to gang at ance," said Benjie; "for tho' ye hiv't a' afore ye like a hurl-barrow, ye needna be batherin' yersel' namin' owre the hale country side, like a supperaniwated Snapper and Miner, and keepin' us stannin' here a' day."

"Ye needna be sae thrawurt and cam-sham naither nae, frien', an' folk daein' a' they can for ye," returned the shepherd. Howsomdever, I've nae loath to tell ye the way ye gae. Ye jist haud owre by there till ye come to the drains, and keep alang by the side o' them, and turn aff at the bit bourouk o' divots. Keep alang the feal dyke till ye come to the third yett; gang through, and sklent across till ye come to the threshie field. Keep alang the side till the rucks o' grass, then gang right doun 'ull the whuns, and then cut through, an it'll bring ye to the hie-road, whaun ye'll be able to find the way for yersel's."

"I'll gie ye something tae yersel' for yer trouble, man, if ye'll pit us on the road," said Benjie; "for I dinna mind what ye've said at a'."

"Ow, there's nae occasion for that, naither," said the shepherd, trying to be very modest, though brightening up at the prospect of getting the "something." "I'll jist gang in for my staff and my plaid, an' tak a stap owre a bit wi' ye."

"I daresay I'll tak a smoke, if ye dinna find faut wi' me lichtin' my pipe," said Benjie.

"Shurely, shurely, man; dae sae; I'se ne'er seek to hinder ye," replied the shepherd. "I baith chaw an' tak a draw o' the cuttie mysel', when I can get it; but I canna kin'le oucht the noo."

"Ah! but I'll gie ye a fill, an' a guid ane tae," said Benjie, "if ye gie me a licht."

"Ow, if yer ganna be sae guid to me," returned the shepherd, "come inowre-hy and licht yer pipe, and we'll see if Recchie has a bit waught o' milk to keep yer hearts gaun owre the muir."

To this proposition they made no objections. They entered the house of this hospitable individual, not without observing sundry signs of disapproval on the part of his amiable spouse, whose storm-gage-looking brow fell two or three degrees. But at a significant side look from her husband, she allowed one or two of the wrinkles to relax, and assumed something of the appearance she had previously borne.

"See, Recchie, if ye hae a mouthfu' o' milk for thir chaps," said the shepherd, as they entered. "I'm gaun owre a bit o' the muir wi' them. Maybe they wad like a bit pease-bannock alang wi' their sowp milk, as they've a bit daintie road afore them."

"Let them lean themsel's down then," said the lady of the mansion, "and I'll see what I can dae for them. Ye can gang tae the aumry yersel', as ye hae the key o't, and I'll be reamin' a bowl o' milk the time ye're gettin' oot the pickin' frae ben the house."

She disappeared on her errand, and Willie seated himself on a tub turned buttom upwards; while his father busied himself getting his pipe prepared for

smoking, and electrified the shepherd by handing him a piece of tobacco about the length of his arm.

"Weel I wat, ye hinna made a fule o' me na," said the shepherd, as he detached a mouthful, and put the rest in his pocket. "I've had naething tae chow this while back but jennipers and craw-crowps; sae it's a raal trate tae me tae get a wee bit 'bacca. But she'll be here the noo wi' the milk, and I hinna got the things brocht oot yet."

So saying, he proceeded to clear the table of the breakfast bickers; and Benjie, enlivened at the prospect of enjoying the smoke he was making preparations for, begun to testify his delight by singing—

If e'er I wander ony place,
Though the road be lang and eerie,
A weel-filled pipe, stuck in my face,
Is the thing to keep me cheerie.
So spread the dottle lightly on,
And kin'le't saft and gently,
Then ye will——

He stopped short, however; for his attention was arrested by a shuffling noise which came from the inner apartment, to which the shepherd had just proceeded for the purpose of bringing out the bread of which they were to partake. Guess their surprise when, before they had time to think what the noise meant, or make any remark thereon, a cry of "Benjie! Benjie! is that you?" was heard, and to their great astonishment Katie Curmuddie sprung past the shepherd to where they were, skilfully eluding his attempt to stop her.

"Guid God, Katie! is that you?" ejaculated Benjie, rubbing his eyes. "What the sorry way gaurs ye come loupin' in on folk that way, after they never expeckit tae see ye in life, and startin' them oot o' half their wuts? Tae tell ye the truth, ye're a appareetion I ne'er expeckit tae see carryin' its ain sowl about wi't; for my cart's gaun awa this mornin' tae bring hame some dead carcage which was ettled tae belang tae you! My

certie! see what a bonny pickle you've put as a' in wi' yer wanderin' terrivees."

"Jist come awa back tae yer ain end, like a canny lass," said the shepherd, as he took hold of one of her arms. "Ye manna gang on that gaet."

"Willie! Willie!" cried the girl, imploringly, and trying to disengage herself from the grasp of the shepherd; "ye winna let me be lockit up there again?"

"Jist ne'er mind her at a'," said the shepherd, applying his other hand to strengthen his hold. "She's jist a puir crater that we've had the keepin' o' this while back. Tho' she whyles gangs owre the tow, and kicks and warsels like a awald toop, yet she's gie quiet through the piece, and sometimes lies wi' her een turned up like a deein' yowe at a corbie, and never says naither guid nor bad for days thegither. I daresay she's seen ye before, tho'?" he added, as his confusion abated.

"Jist let her abee for a minute," said Benjie, laying down his pipe; "I dinna understand this. Did ye not come here o' yer ain accord, Katie?"

"No, no me; it wad been the last thing I wad ever thocht o' daein'," replied Katie. "I'll be unco gled tae get oot o' this again. I dinna ken richt what way I was brocht here ava; but I hope ye winna leave me?"

"No, I'm duddie!" replied Benjie. "Ye maun gang wi' us, and explain what has happened since ye left."

"Ye canna tak awa the woman oot o' my house," said the shepherd, looking alarmed. "It's as muckle's my place is woth tae let her oot. I was weel warned against lettin' folk come aboot, and was clean daft tae let ye within my door. The maister 'ill be naither tae haud nor tae bind when he hears o't."

"Ay, wha the deevil's the maister, and what has he tae dae wi' her?" inquired Willie, trying to look very furious.

"My maister!—my maister!" said the shepherd, apparently feeling he had committed himself too far; "that's him that got her tae us tae keep, ye ken."

“Wha is he, tho’?” exclaimed Benjie, with perfect astonishment. “What has he or ony body had tae dae wi’ ye, Katie?”

“O this is it, is’t? Ay, guidman, ye see whaur yer palaverin’s landed ye!” said his wife, coming in as Benjie was speaking. “I couldna think what the collieshangie and a’ the bletherin’ was about. What’s their wull wi’ the lassick?”

“Thir folk says she’s tae gae ‘wa wi’ them,” he replied; “but we canna alloo the likes o’ that tae be, when we’ve sich strick charges aboot her.”

“Jist refuse tae gie her up at ance, and be dune wi’t,” rejoined Benjie, somewhat sarcastically, and winking to Katie as he spoke. “Ye ken what they’ll dae for keepin’ up a cow or a sheep by force? They’ll a’mait set ye owre the sea for that, and it only a beast. Noo, here’s a body yer wantin’ tae keep here against her wull; and tho’ ye wad hae nae chance wi’ hiz by foul means, if it cam tae that, we’ll no seek tae tak her awa that way. If ye’re determined tae keep her, e’en dae sae. But I may tell ye, that she’s plenty tae see after her; and afore mony hours gangs round, if ye dinna let her gae, ye’ll be in the jail, chained hand and fit; and lang afore the Yowe Fair, ye’ll be hingin’ comfortable by the neck, and ither folk drivin’ yer beasts tae the market, and you no there tae see!”

“Lord sake! if that’s the way o’t,” said the shepherd, something alarmed, “if that’s the way o’t, she’s no be here muckle langer, aither wi’ my will or against her ain. What dae ye say, Recchie?”

“O, ye ken weel enough,” returned Recchie, “that I ne’er liket the bussness frae the first, and thocht a’ along that if it was the raal thing, there was nae use for a’ the whillie-wha-in’ and hiddlin’s, and you was tae hae got yer loof owre weel creeshed for the siller tae bring a blessin’! Ye ken she’s tae be awa at ony rate in twa-ree days; so the quicker ye shake hands wi’ the bussness, and shank her oot the gaet, the better.”

"So ye had naething tae dae wi' bringin' the lassie here, then?" said Benjie.

"Weel, I hadna muckle; but I canna exackly free mysel' a'thegither aither na," returned the shepherd, "for I helped tae bring her across. But then, ye ken, I thocht at the time the thing was a' square, and I didna fash mysel' muckle aboot it, for she jist said and did what I was tauld beforehand she wad maist likely dae."

"Ah, Katie! this 'ill no dae," said Benjie, a little doubtingly. "If ye was ta'en awa that way, what way did ye write the letter ye left for the doctor? It disna tell very weel that!"

"It's as true's death, that I ne'er pat pen tae paper in my life concernin' him," replied Katie. "What dae ye mean by that?"

"If that's the way o' the thing, we can hear the rest by the road," said Benjie. "The sooner we're oot o' this, and awa hame, the better," he continued, addressing the shepherd. "Sae if ye're gaun tae gie us what ye was sayin', ye can look sherp wi't, for we've nae time tae pit aff noo."

The articles were produced with great alacrity; and after partaking, they left the domicile without opposition, accompanied by Katie and the shepherd.

CHAPTER XXXII.

An' are ye sure the news are true,
An' are ye sure *she's* weel?

Old Song.

THE shepherd guided the party through all the turns he had indicated in his directions, begging all the way that he might be kept out of the scrape into which he had inadvertently fallen. Getting them set so far on the way as to leave no doubt of their finding their road without difficulty, he left them, after telling who his master was, and eliciting a promise from Benjie to be as lenient with him as circumstances would permit.

They got through their journey very well, without attracting much observation. As they neared the village, Benjie began to congratulate himself on the happiness and surprise it would be to his wife to find him returning home sober, after such a long absence, or, as he expressed it himself, "gettin' hame sae most awfu' stuffie." He had the candour, however, to admit that this interesting result was perhaps more owing to his having been out of the way of all tempting liquida, than from any exertion or denial on his part.

The doctor had called in on Mrs Artichoke, to make inquiries about her husband's absence, which had made her a little uneasy, when, greatly to the surprise of both, the wanderers arrived, accompanied by Katie. Mrs Artichoke was so astonished that she walked round the girl two or three times, as if unable to convince herself that it really was the person she thought.

"I'm the boy ye see, doctor," said Benjie, looking

very mighty. "Gad, ye may a' gang haikin' here and there, but I can produce the thing when I try't."

"Well, I'm glad to see you home," said the doctor. "But what has been the meaning of all this?" he continued, addressing Katie; "and where have you come from?"

"I couldna help it a'thegither, sir," said Katie. "I was saft to let mysel' be ta'en awa; but I took nae heed till owre late, an' I couldna get back again."

"Who kept you, and whom did you go with?" inquired the doctor, rather surprised.

"It's that sleepy-lookin' sowl, Gobbler, owre at the back o' the hill, sir," said Benjie, unable to keep longer silent. "He's dune't a', and ye'll maybe ken better than I dae what way he's ta'en the trouble."

"Mr Gobbler!" said the doctor, more astonished than ever. "If he took you away, Katie, why did you write the letter?"

"Me, sir? I never did ony sic thing," returned Katie. "Maybe the letter that was left wad hae something tae dae wi' what ye mean, but I had nae hand in't."

"Where did the letter come from, then?" inquired the doctor, eagerly; "and how did it get into my house?"

"Jist tell't a' owre again, Katie, my woman, as ye did comin' across. That's the best way," said Benjie.

"Weel, sir," said the girl, "the way it happened was this:—That nicht Miss Golloch was expeckit hame, and after Mr Skeldrin had passed in his gig tae meet her, I was stannin' in the kitchen door-cheek lookin' oot, after I had a' thing ready for them. It was beginnin' tae get kind o' grey dark, whan a man a' row'd up in a plaid cam across the park, and said it was a fine nicht, and asked if ye was at hame. I said no, and tauld him it wad likely be a wee gliff afore ye was back, as ye had some places tae gang. I asked him if he had ony word tae leave ye. He said

he had a letter for ye, and he began jokin' and spe
and I wasna sure whether I kenn'd him or no,
couldna see his face richt, the way he was row'd
thocht he kenn'd me fine tho', and that I had forg
wha he was; for he tauld me he had seen my mit
the park-corner as he cam up. He said she was v
there, and she wanted me tae rin across a min
she was keen tae see me aboot something parti
and couldna come a' the length, as she was waiti
kepp somebody. As he was jist gaun richt ba
volunteered tae bear me company the length he
I said I didna care aboot leavin' the house clean
but as I wasna tae be mony minutes, and was l
for Willie back jist at the time, I pat the letter o
kitchen-table, intendin' tae tak it ben when I gaed
and thraw'd the key in the door, so that Willie
get in, and gaed awa through the field wi' the
never thinkin' what was tae happen. Weel, we
sidey-for-sidey through the park quite jaccoo, a
weel enOUGH till we cam tae the road. There
cart and a horse stannin' waitin' there, and a
stannin' haudin't; and the ane I gaed owre wi'
me wi' a surly voice tae get into the cart, and the q
I keepit, it wad be the better for me. I was
frichted oot my wuts, and began tae greet; for I t
they wad be ginna burk me, and carry me awa t
disseckin'-rooms. They tauld me if I gaed in quie
harm wad come tae me; sae after lookin' tae se
nae ane was comin' tae help me, I gaed in, and
drave aff alang a by-road, and daur'd me tae spe
cry oot. I never saw a crater, till we got tae the
whaur Willie and his faither got me; but tho' w
I dinna ken if I wad haen power tae cry oot, I w
fear'd."

"Have you any idea what they intended to do
you?" inquired the doctor. "Were they to kee
shut up all your life?"

"I dinna exackly ken, sir," replied Katie; "bu

what I heard, I think they meant tae get me sent hame tae Brummel-Green blind-eens in a week or twa after this."

"So this is how it stands?" said the doctor. "We've got to the bottom of the whole thing now. I must go off, and see what's to be done. Run up for my horse, Willie. I sent it to the smithy to get the shoes put on."

"I think I'll gang up and tell Mrs Curmuddie that her dochter's hame," said Benjie, "case it be owre muckle for her, the lassie gaun in hersel'."

"I was just intending to go there, at any rate," said the doctor; "so I daresay I'll relieve you of the task."

Benjie, perhaps wishing to make thoroughly sure that she got home, also went up with her; and the doctor leaving them a short distance from Mrs Curmuddie's door, went forward and tapped on it with his cane.

No one answering, he repeated it again a little louder, when "Tuts! come in, if your feet's clean," was the ill-natured response.

The doctor entered, and found Mrs Curmuddie engaged so busily at the fireside with something or other, that she did not even look round for a little.

"My guidness! it's you, sir," she said, somewhat confused when she observed the doctor. "I kenn'd ye was hame, but I didna ettle tae see ye the noo. I seldom need tae answer the door, for my visitors are no often sae partickler as tae rap; and when I heard ye dae't, I thocht it was maybe some o' the weans daein't for a bit trick, as they've been at it the day a'ready; but I'm aye sae ready wi' my lang tongue!"

"Never mind, never mind; there's no harm done," returned the doctor. "I've just called in to tell you what has taken place."

"I've heard it a' a'ready!" returned Mrs Curmuddie; "and unco sair it's pat me aboot, and muckle grief I've haen wi't. I've been greetin' aboot the lamb a' day;

and if I had my bit moolin' o' denner swallowed, I'm jist gaun awa tae begin again!"

"So you have heard of the report that the police-officer brought yesterday, then?" said the doctor.

"O ay, puir woman! I've heard o' that," replied Mrs Curmuddie, looking very melancholy.

"O well, that must have turned out to be some mistake. It cannot be she, at any rate; and you need not give yourself any trouble about it," said the doctor. "Your daughter is alive, and well!"

"Losh keep us a'! is she really a' richt, after a' the kick-up and racket?" said Mrs Curmuddie. "But I hope ye're no speakin' at random, and buildin' me up, jist tae be cast farer doun than ever I was."

"Oh, no; I assure you she's all right," returned the doctor; "and if you'll go to the door, you'll find some one there able to tell you all about it."

"Ay, wha the sorry may that be?" said Mrs Curmuddie. "Some o' their leeshin' nonsense again, I fancy; but, howsever, I'll gang oot and see what they've tae say till't, whae'er it is."

"Preserve me! it's really you, Katie, is't?" exclaimed Mrs Curmuddie, on reaching the outside of the door. "So ye've finished yer wanderin' whigmaleeries, hae ye? My certie! I think ye wad hae been fully as weel at hame maybe, instead o' kickin' up sic a racket, and makin' sic a horn-fule o' yersel' tae the bargain."

"Lord bless me! that's a reception and a-half tae gie yer dochter, after she's come back tae ye a' hale and weel," said Benjie. "Ye shouldna misca' yer bairn that gaet, when ye dinna ken what yer speakin' aboot."

"Will ye tell me I 'dinna ken what I'm speakin' aboot,' ye flae-luggit whalp ye?" returned Mrs Curmuddie, her wrath rising at this accusation. "Ye'll come and set up yer impidence tae me at my ain door! Little wad haud me frae cloutin' yer chafts, and ye wad be cheap o' sic a han'sel."

"Losh, woman! be canna, and no flee up on folk

that way, like tae tak their head aff a'thegither," returned Benjie. "We ken yer bark's waur nor yer bite; but it frichts folk tae hear ye beginnin' that way."

"Keep a ceevil tongue in yer head then, and I'll no fash my thoom wi' ye," said Mrs Curmuddie. "I dinna like folk tae gang against every word that comes oot my mouth, the same's I was some idiwut."

"There's naebody has ony sic thochts in their head, my bonny woman," returned Benjie. "I was only sayin' that ye didna ken the richt set o't, and that yer dochter wasna tae blame."

"Then it's this hullion here that's haen to dae wi't after a'," she said, turning on the doctor. "I thoct he had owre bonny a polished story; but he's no get oot the pye sae easy as he's maybe thinkin'."

"Losh, mother! will ye haud yer tongue, and no gang on that way to the doctor?" interposed Katie.

"Ay, jist like the rest o' the saft simple tawpies," said Mrs Curmuddie. "Let yersel' be made a lauchin'-stock o', an'——"

"Dinna! dinna gang on at that rate, for ony sake, mother," she again said, imploringly. "The doctor had nae hand whatever wi' me gaun awa, and I had nane aither; for it was clean oot o' baith my will and his power to prevent it, that I was carried aff."

"Ay, 'carried ye aff,' d'ye say? My certie! that's gie likely, or else no!" replied Mrs Curmuddie. "I really wonder wha that ever saw ye in daylight wad seek to rin awa wi' you i' the dark. If ye wull dae ill, or be sae silly as rin rakin' up an' down the country, ye'll get nae cuttin's frae me onyway, an' ye needna try to pass the thing owre that way."

"Will ye no let yer lassie tell ye the dounricht truth, woman?" said Benjie. "To be plain, tho' the doctor's there, I'll jist tell ye that it's that sloongin' hound that's to be marriet to Skeldrin's dochter at Thrissle Ha', thoct the doctor was puttin' him fair oot; so he carried

awa your lassie, to mak a kick-up, and to get the Skel-drins set against the doctor here. Ye saw it answered the purpose gie weel; for the 'the swine ran through't' wi' the doctor and her, and this vagabon's had it a' his ain way since."

"Ah, the loopie-haingle!" exclaimed Mrs Curmuddie. "It's a pity a vratch like that should get rest on the yirth! Cockie Cheeper, the fiddler, dram an' a', had been quite richt sayin' he saw my lassie gaun through the park! Losh man!" she continued, turning to the doctor, "if ye've a sparklin' o' spunk in ye, ye'll gang across and shake the sowl oot him afore he's a day aulder."

"I intend to go over," said the doctor, smiling; "though I'll perhaps hardly go so far as you instigate. But why haven't you brought my horse?" he said, addressing Willie, who came up at that moment.

"Auld Studdie's got 'on the cod,' and he canna work," returned Willie, grinning.

"He's got what?" said the doctor. "I don't understand you."

"He's got 'half-smeekeit,' and his wife says he'll be as guid's naebody a' day," returned Willie. "He's hardly able to steady himsel' to blaw the bellises, far less mak horse shoon, or nailin' them on aither."

"I suppose you mean he has been drinking?" said the doctor.

"Jist that," said Benjie. "He'll hae got a bit cauker or twa owre muckle, and it'll hae ta'en his neb. He's a terrible trough for drink, and I shouldna wonder tho' he wash himsel' awa wi't a'thegither some day or lang."

"Well, what am I to do about going to Thistle Ha'?" said the doctor. "Will my horse not can go as it is?"

"No, sir," said Willie, shaking his head; "for the 'prentice has torn the shoon aff, and I doot it wad hardly dae without them. But I thocht I saw the cart turnin'

the brae. It should be here directly. If it's them, what wad ail ye to drive owre in it?"

"Lord sic! gang in!" said Benjie, as he perceived the cart; "gang in, Katie, and keep oot o' sicht, and let me hae a rise wi' Watty. It's jist them—there they're comin'. Wha will't be they've gotten?"

They stayed in out of sight as directed, and Benjie awaited at the door for the cart.

"Ony tidin's, then?" inquired Benjie, as the cart drove up. "Ye've surely got a gie fleg with something, ye're lookin' baith sae sober!"

"Tidin's be hanged!" said Charlie, with a look of intense disgust and disappointment, as he leaped from the cart. "It's as weel I didna mak up a graft, after a; for I wad got nae thanks for my attention, an' as like as nocht naething for my trouble—tho' that wadna matter'd sae muckle. But, my faith! if I hadna my reg'lar customers to luppin tae, I wad blaw at a cauld coal, for a' that's tae be made aff ony orra job."

"Ye micht made it, an' keepit it for yersel', man!" returned Benjie. "It wad save ye payin' for the howkin', if ye leeve to need ane; an' it wad be something tae brag o', tae say ye howkit yer ain grave! Every body couldna say the same."

"Hoots, man! I'm no sae selfish as that a'thegither aither," returned Charlie; "for I wad rather dae a bit job for a freend, an' see mysel' wantin' ane a gie wee!"

"Well, what has your friend's report turned out?" inquired the doctor, who had now joined the speakers. "I see the cart is empty."

"Deed, sir," returned Watty, looking rather chop-fallen, "it's been a thieveless job a'thegither o't, an' little better than a gouk's errant. I aye thocht Humphrey Handcuff was uncommon partickler; but he's made an unco fule o' baith himsel' an' o' me tae, this time! The short an' the lang was this:—He heard there was a body come down wi' the spate, and in his

hurry to let me hear about it, as he kenn'd I was anxious, he sent aff word afore he gaed to see what was what. After he did gang, an' put baith himsel' and ither folk to a bonny trouble gettin' the thing ta'en oot the place it was washed into, they fand it was naething mair than a auld scarrecraw, that had been washed awa aff the head-rig o' ane o' auld Yirdworm the farmer's tatie-fields at the water-side!"

"It's a pity but it had been hissel', the auld hard deevil," said Benjie. "But he'll be thinkin' it's stolen, and break his heart about it; so that'll maybe turn oot a bit job for Charlie!"

"Well, it's a good thing matters are no worse," returned the doctor. "We've got her here all safe and sound."

"Got her 'a' safe an' sound,' have ye?" said Watty, looking particularly incredulous. "And what has she got to say for hersel', comin' back this way, after pittin' a' the parish in sic a stir about her?"

"O, well it seems not to have been her fault at all," returned the doctor; "for she was taken away against her will; and I am just going off to see what the fellow has to say, and it may be as well if you will accompany me. I think now that I shall go to his place first, instead of Thistle Ha'."

"Ay, dod! that'll mak a snappin' case," returned Watty, "If managed richt, he'll get owre the seas at all events. Wha is't that's been the dooer o' the thing, then?"

"O, it's that man Gobbler, the farmer over at Blaw-dreary," returned the doctor. "But the less time we delay the better."

"I want to gang wi' ye tae, sir," said Benjie, "baith to see the fun, an' Jumper 'ill be fully as weel wi' my drivin' as Willie's; an' he can gae hame to your place an' tell what's come owre us."

"Very well," returned the doctor, as he stepped into the spring-cart, followed by Watty, "I've no ob-

jections." So Benjie, taking the reins, leaped up in front, and applying the whip they went off at a swift trot, regardless of the pony's unwillingness to take the road.

Charlie stood staring after them, endeavouring to collect what he had heard, and come to some conclusion as to the meaning thereof; for the sight of the girl had stupified him completely.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Zoobalk. He moves! he looks! he utters sounds! yea, truly,
I bethink me that he speaketh!.

Bodneryc. Whereon commenteth he, the meaning I entreat?

Zoobalk. As wind that shakes the forest, howleth in passing through,
Or lion roars in desert, thy servant knows alone
The existing of the sounds—the voice he can't betray.

"COME into the house, Charlie, man, and dinna stand there glowrin' sae dumfounded-like," said Mrs Curmuddie, as an additional flow of good-humour got instilled into her at the prospect of the overturn she thought the arrival of the doctor at Blawdreary would be likely to produce. "Come in," she repeated, "and I'll gie ye a bit tastin' tae bring ye tae yer senses; for I dinna mind o' seein' ony body glowrin' sae lang at a toom road, and seemin' tae be sae weel pleased and muckle ta'en up wi't."

Charlie's earnestness in following with his eye the departing cart till out of sight, perhaps had left the impression of it so distinctly on his mind, as to make him unconscious of its being hid from his view after passing the turn, as he kept on gazing as eagerly as ever.

"Come in-owre, man," continued Mrs Curmuddie, "and I'll gie ye a bit weetin' tae taste yer mouth; an' drink the lassie's health, noo that she's come hame again, and ye can gae back and glowre after ye're dune, if ye like."

"'Drink the lassie's health!' Faith, I'll dae that, Mrs Curmuddie, my woman, and yer ain afore maist folks," said Charlie, waddling into the house. "But

we've gotten a wonderfu' begunk gaun rakin' and rummagin', and her snug and lockit up as safe's a Sunday bannet in a ben-box."

"Deed, ye may say that," said Mrs Curmuddie; "and I was bonny angry whan I saw her come back, and a gie fettlin' she wad catched for her amous if it had been hersel' had haen a' the daein' o't. But ay, man, there will be yowes in the yard, and toops amang them, in style noo!"

Before the smartings of the dram had quite left Charlie's throat, Mrs Corphoodie limped in, with her teeth firmly clenched, and her mouth bristling with pins. She had seen the cart pass on its way to Blawdreary, and had instantly started for Mrs Curmuddie's.

"Wae dearucks! O waesucks!" mumbled Mrs Corphoodie, holding up one hand in surprise, and leaning on her stick with the other. "The Laplan's is cauld in a simmer day, and mony ither unnat'ral things folk sees in their life-time; but I dinna mind ony body comin' round tae life sae mirac'lus. It coves the gowan this a'thegither! Dear me! the seeven-month wean, that didna sook for aught-and-thretty hours and a-half after it was born, and then cam till itsel', and did naething but lie and soss and rug at its mother's breest like tae pou't aff, had nae chance wi' this cast-up at a'! Bless ye! I've seen them, that was come tae whaur ane wad thocht they had pou'd their legs up tae gie their hin'most kick, leeve and loup dykes for't a'! I've seen a auld wife reveeve three times, jist when we was takin' her keys oot below her head, tae begin tae lay oot the things tae pit on her. Ay, Mrs Curmuddie, I've seen that, and I've seen them 'at's come tae that, leeve tae gie me a hand wi' ither that expeckit tae claw aulder heads nor ony o' hiz hae. I mind o' ae wee deevil o' a bairn, whan I was nippin' its taes, and grabblin' tae find if the spark was flown. Mercy me! the vratch cried oot 'O dear!' jist amang my hands. But, losh me! this dochter o' yours, comin' as it was frae the ither

world, blinds everything I've heard o'. What way's she been awa sic a time? What's"——

Mrs Corphoodie, as it was her custom to speak perpetually wherever she went, would have gone on without intermission, but Mrs Curmuddie made her comprehend that a glass was at her service, when she sat down.

Transferring to her shawl the speary cargo that had obstructed the ingress to her mouth, she clutched the glass with both hands, and began to display her talkativeness in a most elaborate series of healths and wishes for good to fall on Mrs Curmuddie and her family, mixed with numerous inquiries and comments as to Katie's return.

This she was not permitted to dwell upon, as Mrs Curmuddie, giving a short outline of the particulars of her daughter's absence, explained that herself, and Katie, and Willie were on the point of going to apprise Miss Golloch of the wonderful events connected with it.

Knowing that Mrs Curmuddie was not to be trifled with, the glass was soon emptied; and a wish for the evacuation of the premises following, they were all outside without demur.

Mrs Corphoodie crawled away with Charlie, from whom she set about extracting further news on the singular case.

Observing Mr Tawse apparently waiting for their approach, and intending, as she thought, to make some inquiries respecting Katie, Mrs Curmuddie set about drilling her daughter and Willie into what she considered suitable behaviour for the occasion.

"For the life o' yer body, dinna ane o' ye open yer mouth tae the vratch," Mrs Curmuddie began. "Dinna say a word; and if he thinks we're obleeg'd tae satisfy him, I'll dae't. Maybe he thinks I'm fear'd at him; but I wis he had only gien me the half o' what he spat oot on Bummer, he wadna made me snoove awa like him, puir saft tatie! Na; I daresay he wad like fine tae see

thir arms o' mine no able tae vring a blanket, and me tae haud oot my trumlin' hand tae thank the like o' him for a saxpence. If he canna be ceevil tae me, I'll no blaw i' his lug, at ony rate. Look! look!" she ejaculated, perceiving Mr Tawse was shifting his quarters; "there he goes, ye see. He's awa like's his nose was bluidin', and walin' his feet like a flae on a mangy dog rubbet wi' brumstane."

Mr Tawse moved away as they drew near. Probably, as he and Mrs Curmuddie occasionally enjoyed a skirmish when they came in contact, he had seen by her gestures she was preparing to give him a volley, and had thought best to avoid it.

After sundry interruptions, Mrs Curmuddie and her two companions drew near the doctor's; and as they reached their destination, Meg, the servant, who was busy at the time polishing something at the door, caught sight of the three approaching, and rushed into the house, apparently for the purpose of acquainting Miss Golloch, when she returned to her previous station.

"Weel, Meg, my woman, I see ye ken us again, at ony rate," said Mrs Curmuddie, as she reached the door. "Ay, this is a different set o't the day, my leddy, frae the last time I was at ye," she continued, as Miss Golloch came out to see the unexpected arrival.

"Come into the house, Mrs Curmuddie, and tell me the particulars, and Katie will come with you," said Miss Golloch, as she returned within doors, followed by the two; while Willie was left to submit to Meg's filtrations, which she instantly set about very earnestly and minutely.

"Weel, she's here, ye see, mem," said Mrs Curmuddie, on getting seated in the room beside Miss Golloch; "and it's no been a' her faut thegither, nor the doctor's naither; sae I daresay I was rather a parin' owre the tow that nicht I cam up aboot her. But ye'll allow yersel', my leddy, that things lookit real dreadfu' bad; and it wasna tae be thoct that I wad wink at aither

his fauts or yours, or ony ither body's, whan I had ony thing adae wi' the reddin' o' them."

"No, no, Mrs Curmuddie, that's what you need not regret," said Miss Golloch. "No doubt, you were grieved about what took place, and"—

"Faith was I! my leddy; and there's little use o' ruein' the word or twa noo," said Mrs Curmuddie. "It's aye my way tae open the wab fair oot; and if there's holes, they maun jist be seen; and if a's hale claith, it can stand a look. But there's ae thing—he can be nane the waur o' the bit dirdum, and it may come instead when he's needin' ane some ither day; and he'll no likely hae the luck tae leeve a'thegither without deservin' ane, or he'll no be like ither folk. But, my certie! there'll be a whippin' o' cripples noo, or a' the thing's finished."

"I imagine by you, that there has not been so much blame attachable to the doctor as was suspected," replied Miss Golloch; "but I am a little at a loss to comprehend you perfectly."

"Jist mysel' owre again! my woman—my leddy, I mean," ejaculated Mrs Curmuddie, giving Miss Golloch a whack over the shoulder; "jist my very sel' tae a naething. Losh! ye ken whan I saw her, and heard o' her, I thocht it was her, then I thocht it was him, and open'd first on her, and then on him, and gaed them baith through the reek afore I made it oot; and Benjie tae got a bit yank in the by-gaun. Baith you and me, mem, hae been alike in takin't up!" Mrs Curmuddie then indulged in a hearty and prolonged laugh at the similarity she saw betwixt herself and Miss Golloch, in getting an understanding of the matter.

"Na, na, mem," she again began, "ou was a' aff our eggs, and as cauld and far frae the richt set, as weans playing at kittly-kout lookin' for a sweetie that ane o' them's eaten. You was thinkin' ae thing, he was thinkin' anither; I had a way o' my ain, and folk had a way o' theirs. Losh, woman! an a' vrang thegither—

it's queer! It's been fair ravel'd yarn, and run knots on't forby."

"I must just confess, Mrs Curmuddie, that I have not yet quite made out your meaning," said Miss Golloch. "Where have you been, Katie?" she added, addressing the girl, in the expectation of eliciting replies from her more easily interpreted than Mrs Curmuddie's peculiar phrases.

"Mr Gobbler at Blawdreary took"—

"Will ye devauld, ye yelpin' pyet ye?" said Mrs Curmuddie, turning on Katie, who instantly stopped speaking. "It'll ne'er be a bairn o' mine that'll tak the word oot my mouth as lang's I hae ane. Yes, mem," she continued, "it's yon snoolin' snoukin' jook they ca' Gobbler—him that was cried i' the kirk on Sunday—he wyled the doofie awa, and there's been a heap o' here-awa there-awas about it; but ye'll see the crucks and thraws o' the cunnin' wilyart vagabon noo as weel's me, I'm ettlin'. He's wrocht himsel' a garten that'll no haud up his stockin' vera weel or muckle langer, I'm dootin'. Ken ye onything o' whan the waddin' was tae come aff?"

"Well," replied Miss Golloch, a more apparent gleam of the facts showing itself, "I think you mean that Mr Gobbler has had a share in your daughter's staying away. I wish the doctor had been here!"

"He's better whaur he is," returned Mrs Curmuddie. "Him and Mr Archychok and Watty's a' awa to get claucht o' the loober. Ou was a' grumphin' and wonderin' what was keepin' Willie and his faither sic a dreadfu' lang time, and little thinkin' what wad be the upshot o't. Thae gommerals wi' their scarrecraw tae pat us a' through-ither. I canna help lauchin' yet, mem, to think, after a' Watty's adae, and haichlin' Charlie wi' him, that they had a' their tramp for a scarrecraw;—and Benjie comin' hame sae bricht, and her wi' him hale an' weel, it's perfet divertin'!"

"So there has been no one drowned, from what you

say," replied Miss Golloch. "I am glad to hear that, as after the officer's report, I thought some one had been unlucky enough to fall into the water."

"Losh me, mem! never speak o' the pulice,—o' Watty at ony rate," said Mrs Curmuddie. "He's a canny eneugh man for you to look at, or to be stannin' lookin' at you,—ye'd tak about the same herm frae Watty ony o' the ways, puir man; but to ettle muckle to come oot o' the exertions o' him, or ony o' his clan, it's jist little better nor castin' water on a droon'd mouse. They can gang aboot fine, tae be sure, and keek, and glowre, and speer, and come an' tell what they've seen and heard o', and mak an unco blaw aboot what they wad dune if they had only kenn'd sic a thing, and been at sic a place at sic a time, an' seen sae an' sae dae this or that,—that's the maist feck I've ever seen o' them sin' e'er they cam in. But gie them a bit callant tho', or a body that's gotten a dram owre muckle, an' ye wad wonder the racket they can mak."

"Well, I am very happy it has turned out so," said Miss Golloch, glad that Mrs Curmuddie had halted a moment. "We shall hear what the doctor has to say by-and-by."

"I see ye're tired o' me, mem; but it disna matter, —I'll no bather ye lang," said Mrs Curmuddie. "I naither like to be whaur I'm owre muckle bookit, nor whaur there's owre muckle buttery fondness. I like whaur I'm owre walcome as bad's the ither thing. A teeger wad like ane fine to gang in beside it in it's den, if it answered itsel'; that's the way o' a' heap o' folk. Faith! I see few richt walcomes, excep folk gaun to pay 'counts, or court dochters, and thae's no very guid anes aither. I'll cut my stick; and ony ither little things I've to speak on I'll see the doctor, and settle wi' him. Dinna think ye've been obleegin' me i' the sma'est, mem, the twa-three minutes o' wearyin' ye've haen for me tae gae oot yer gaet. For my part, I dinna think it nae compliment in the world to speak

wi' ony body; my sang, na! I cam oot o' guid; but it'll be a wee or my shadday blackens yer door again. Guid day."

Miss Golloch being unprepared for this sally, and not knowing the exact cause of it, remained silent. Mrs Curmuddie and her daughter then retired; and after a word or two with the servant and Willie, they turned towards Mrs Artichoke's, to take up the case anew with her.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Kind Hope may lend her aid, and send
Some comfort to the heart;
But far more bitter is the sting
Of Disappointment's dart,
If by Hope's aid the spirit sad
Be tempted to give place
To phantom joys, that rush again
To misery's embrace.

NOTWITHSTANDING the wish evinced by Jumper to draw up at the "Cheerie Farmers," as had been his custom in passing always to do, from the time he had come into the possession of his present owner, he was driven past it at a smart pace, not without his driver feeling he was committing a great act of self-denial, as was evident from his more than once

. "Casting a longing, ling'ring look behind,"

and hinting, as he did so, that he "could have tasted, if they had haen time."

The doctor intended to go to Thistle Ha' as well as Blawdreary; but he resolved to proceed to Blawdreary first, thinking it more prudent, for the sake of the Thistle Ha' people, that Mr Gobbler should be seen before going there, and the truth inquired into, and his guilt or innocence established, as the case might be.

On—on—on, they made their way, jolting fearfully as they passed through the moor, and they never halted till they reached the footpath which struck up to the residence of the gentleman they were in quest of.

The mist, which in the fore part of the day had been floating in thick volumes over the whole face of the

country, was now taking its farewell; and with the exception of the hill tops, which it still appeared loath to leave, the view around was unobstructed, and the old house of Blawdreary stood exposed to their sight. The party alighted, greatly to the relief of Jumper, who immediately commenced an attack upon the already well-cropped grass, with a ravenous eagerness and determination to leave none standing that was within reach.

Benjie declared his belief, that Jumper "wad bide quite contented, as lang's there was a pile o' grass on the muir;" and signified his wish to be allowed to accompany the doctor and Watty up to the house, so that he might be "in at the death," and ready to "hing on in case of a stramash." But the doctor considering the official gentleman as quite sufficient for all that might be needed, Benjie reluctantly consented to remain behind, and look after the cart. He made Watty promise that he would "sing oot," in the event of their prisoner showing fight, if they required an extra hand to throttle him; and remarking that it was "as cheap sittin' as stannin'," he resumed his position he had occupied as driver, and set about preparing a smoke. Putting on as happy and contented a face as he could afford under such trying circumstances, he proceeded to hum—

Tho' roads o'erflow wi' slush and mud,
The deil a bit if ere I care,
If I hae sich a jolly nicht
As the last time I cam owre the muir.

He had only got this length, and had not entered into the particulars of what were the exact charms of his "jolly nicht," when a voice behind him said,

"Ye've surely thocht a gie deal o't, freen', that ye're sae sune back again. But ken ye ocht o' what's come o' my man ava? He cam back frae seein' ye owre the heather, and gaed awa again tae look after his yowes, and tae ca' at the maister's, and I've ne'er seen sicht o'

him since. I'm jist gaun tae see if they ken ocht about him up-by. He ne'er likit tae let his denner hour gae lang past, and I doot a's no as it should be. Losh, man! I've aye been fear'd that lassick wad dreive tae something nae guid! Ye're a canna man, and I daresay ye'll no refuse tae tell a puir body if onything's come owre her bread-winner?"

Benjie stopped short in his song, and started on hearing the voice, and the shower of sparks he was driving from the policeman's "frizzle" quickly subsided. He was rather taken by surprise at recognising his friend of the morning; and removing his pipe from between his teeth, he answered, "The deevil a bit o' me kens onything o' yer man. I've naither seen hunt or hare o' him sin' he left's in the forenoon. But if he's up about the house there, ye'll hear something o' him the noo; for the offisher's awa tae see after yer maister; and as ye're a' gie like ae swine's pick, he'll maybe hae a bit word tae say tae yer man, if he's there, and maybe tae yersel' tae, if ye gang owre;—sae I wad gie ye my advice, tae mak yersel' as scarce hereaboot as ye can."

"Dear sick's me! my puir Mawcum! I was aye fear'd that queen wad bring something on our heads no tae be wished for. I'll no bide here, and my man in the hands o' the Phili-stanes. I'll gang up and see what they're daein'." So saying, she set off, leaving Benjie muttering doubts as to her sanity, as he again began to strike the light for his pipe, which her interview had interrupted him in.

We must now accompany the doctor and Watty, who got up the pathway in due time; and after some difficulty, crossing the dunghill, and wading among gutters and dirt, succeeded in getting themselves piloted through the labyrinths of other nuisances in the farm-yard, and presented themselves before the biggest door, at which they knocked. This caused considerable annoyance to a great fat pig, which had taken up its abode on the straw-mat which ornamented the step,

and lay there at length like a watch-dog, raising its head and grunting as they approached. There was no answer returned to the summons, so it was again repeated louder and longer than at first.

This second attempt, though it failed to attract the notice of the inmates, brought out of a door, which seemed to lead to a stable, a boy armed with a shovel, with which he had evidently been working. Judging from his face, his country might have been a matter of difficulty to guess. But as he leaned on the shovel, and took off his large blue bonnet for the purpose of being enabled to scratch with greater freedom, his brow was observed to bear a hue, though not of the purest white, yet sufficient to show the other colouring of his frontispiece to be composed of something artificial. His feet, too, were rather curious, and must have been of immense size, in proportion to his body, if the boots which ornamented them came anything near a correct fit. These curiosities were displayed to full advantage, as the young gentleman had his trousers drawn so firmly up to near his armpits, that the legs of them extended only a very short way below his knees. The capacity of this article of dress was not, for all that, otherwise of little extent, as they were crowded into many a plait around his waist and haunches. He wore no jacket or vest, but these were represented by his shirt, the sleeves of which merely reached the turn of his elbow, where the two sides of the cuff were distantly surveying each other over a bridge of moderately thick rope. This was made to serve the purpose of buttons, as recourse to the use of these articles in such straitened circumstances would have been impossible. Round his neck, too, the same difficulty was presented to a greater extent, but was surmounted by the same ingenious device. If the latter article of his dress had ever been made to suit him, it must either have been when he was very young, or his march away from it had followed very rapidly, although he was not by any means like an overgrown

subject for his age. Guessing from his look alone, perhaps this might be doubtful; for the cords which served the purpose of braces had, from the tight way they were drawn, forced the middle of his shoulders down, and the arm-tops up, and this of itself imparted a grotesque appearance to the juvenile, and mixed a shade of maturity with the indications of his youth. His head, from this peculiarity in his build, had the appearance of a fortress, with a turret on each side; while the blanks in his front teeth, some of which had been knocked out here and there, served to represent embrasures. This uncommon nondescript stood staring with a look of considerable impertinence, but said nothing till Watty called to him if his master was at hand, when he yelled out very loudly, "Looeza, there's twa mans a bittlin' the big door, axin' for the Whaizle."

In answer to this scream, there came out of another place, probably a byre, a woman attired in a short petticoat of a blue colour, plentifully bespattered with cow-dung, which made it agree admirably with the colour of her bare feet and ankles, which were well coated with the same material. She had on a kind of scanty, cold-looking short cloak, hanging over her shoulders, and open in front. One sleeve of it was rolled up to the armpit, and the other torn off about the elbow. She threw back, out of her way, her disorderly red hair, which was ornamented pretty freely with the same substance which displayed her petticoat to such advantage, and gave her head the look as if three or four cow-tails had been cut from their owners, and attached to it. She stood surveying the visitors, and grinning to the imp opposite for a second or two, and then cried out, "If ye wants onything, gae along till the tither door, and gae in withoot reelin', and ye'll see Tibby. But tak tent o' the deuks'-pool in the inside o' the door-stap, and no be waddlin' oot owre't, and chirtin' the guts's oot o' the young anes."

Her companion laughed very loudly at this, and added a supplement which was neither distinctly heard nor understood, though it was evident he had been indulging in some remark disagreeable to the strangers, or which he meant to be such, as he vanished almost immediately after he spoke.

"Can you not come, and tell that we want to see Mr Gobbler?" cried the doctor, addressing the red-haired goddess.

"I daurna for the sowl o' me gae within the hoose the noo," she replied; "for Tibby wad split my head wi' the spurtle, or clash a basen o' dish-washin's in my face. If ye're keen till ken, ye maun jist gae in yersel's; but mind take tent o' the deuks." So saying, she also disappeared into her retreat.

"Well, I suppose we must find our way in as we best can," said the doctor. "This is the most uncivilized spot I have had the misfortune to visit for many a day."

By keeping strict look-out as cautioned, they got safely in without damaging any of the flock of young quackers, that were enjoying themselves in a dub of water inside the outer door of what was supposed to lead to the kitchen. The old hen, who acted as their guardian, flew at the legs of the intruders with considerable fury, all her energies to scratch and tear being put into requisition; while her feathers rose on end, as she clucked with rage at being disturbed. They soon got past, and the ruffled plumage smoothed down; but her attention had hardly been taken off the doctor and Watty, when, with much louder outcry, she began to peck at the shepherd's wife, who entered immediately behind them.

"Let me by, gentles; let me past ye," said she, "and I'll gae in afore ye, case ye play cleich owre onything, and break yer shins. There's aye walth o' tubs wi' yirnin, and rowth o' barrels in the road; but ye'll be a' richt if ye let me in afore ye!"

Of course, they were too glad to have her services as guide through the peat smoke, to have any objections to her preceding them. She led the way along an entrance, in which, notwithstanding her frequently repeated cautions, they several times nearly upset themselves by coming in contact with the numerous articles which lined the passage in every style of irregularity and confusion.

At length they groped their way into an apartment, with a large fire of peats and wood burning in the midst of it. The smoke from this, heedless of the wide inviting appearance of the chimney, found its way coiling and drifting into every corner of the place. Two melancholy, sick-looking lambs were tied to the legs of a table, placed in such close proximity to the fire, that had the shepherd's wife not seen the danger they were exposed to, and pulled the table back some yards, there was every probability that roasting at the stake would have been their fate. Scattered around the apartment, and at first barely perceptible through the dim smoke, sacks, tubs, broken harness, peats, old wood, and fragments of chairs and forms, lay in all directions, turned up-side down and in every possible confusion. Round the walls and chimney, sheep-shears, reaping-hooks, rusty-scythes, skeletons of sheep-heads, blown bladders, crushed lanterns, an old gun, and vast quantities of neglected rubbish, dim with smoke and dust, hung in every quarter where anything could be suspended from. A perfect forest of hoes, picks, broken rakes, forks, spade-handles, and other articles, crowded the rafters above. On a board stretching across two or three of them, the outlines of some dozen or two cheeses could be discerned, lying there drying, and enjoying the full benefit of the peat-reek, along with some blackened objects of the shape of hams that hung beneath them. All this disorder, and the extensive assemblage of plates, cogs, and milk dishes which covered the table; and the pots, tar-kettles, smearing utensils, and old shoes hud-

dled on the top of the "dresser," gave ample proof that the comfort, if not the convenience, of the inhabitants was anything but a primary object.

Opening a thin rattling door at one end of this spacious hovel, which led to a milk-house or place of the kind, their pioneer peered cautiously in, and shouted out, "Tibby! Tibby! are ye there, Tibby?"

"Ay; Lord, I'll Tibby ye! ye skirlin', skreechin' deevil," replied an ill-natured voice from the recess. "I thocht I gien ye eneuch to mak ye bide oot and mind yer wark; but if I had this pourin' o' yirnin pat in the coodie, I'll tak the boosom tae ye, and gie ye a creeshin' that'll gaur ye mind what's said tae ye."

"It's me; it's no Looeza; it's me, my canny woman," returned the shepherd's wife, in reply. "Is my Mawcum about?"

"O guidsic! it's you, Recchie M'Tarry?" replied Tibby, in a tone a little softer. "Lord, woman! ye've been sich a stranger, I had maist forgotten yer lang tongue. I thocht ye was that yelpin' crater come in again, batherin' me. Losh, woman! we've haen an awfu' time o't the last twa days aboot this waddin' an' ae thing and anither. It's made sich a funk and kick-up, that I've seen naething like it aboot the toun sin' that mornin' the Whaizle fell in the big kirk, when he was up in the bauks watchin' to see if ou was stealin' the butter. But I'll be there the noo, to hear what ye've to say, if I had this gien a bit stir aboot."

"There's twa gentles here, Tibby; will ye see what's their wull?" cried Mrs M'Tarry.

"Tuts! let them scart their fit. Are they there again?" cried Tibby. "I'm sure that Hughie Gowans is a perfet batheration. I tauld him the maister was awa seekin' shearin', an' that he wad be far to seek and ill to find. I wonder what the yaffin vratch thinks. I warrant he's nae sma' drink in his ain een, 'cause he's on a bit white dickie on a ilka-day."

"Ah! but this is no the same," said Mrs M'Tarry; "an' ye may as weel speak ceevil."

"Gif that's the way o't, I may as weel no roar sae heavy. But I'll hae a glowre o' them at ony rate," replied Tibby, making her appearance at the same time, wiping with her apron the milk or other liquid which covered her arms and face.

"O losh! no naither thir is the folk I thoct," she ejaculated, on observing the doctor and Watty. "I thoct ye wad be Hughie Gowans, the best-man, and his coosin, Davie Dringlepape; but that's dune nae ill, and it doesna matter. What is't ye hae to say, then?"

"We wish to see Mr Gobbler, if he is at hand," said the doctor.

"It'll be raither fickly to see him the noo, I doot," replied Tibby, adjusting the smoky mutch which kept the hair of her head in its proper place.

"Ye ken we maun hae nae nonsense," said Watty. "What way can we no see him?"

"'Cause the cow calved a quey, and because I tell ye," returned Tibby, in a most insolent tone.

"Is he not in the house just now?" inquired the doctor.

"I tauld ye as much a'ready," returned Tibby; "but if it's to sair onything, he's awa a wee bit frae the door."

"It's baith an unco nice story that, and terrible fine tell't, and raal guid for the occasion," said Watty; "but ye needna jist gien yersel' sic toil to plan't, for we're up to a' thae things lang ago, an' we'll get him tho' we searh every corner o' yer bonnie establishment."

"Ye're a very clever clod in yer ain een, I daresay," replied Tibby; "but let me tell ye, ye'll be a deevilish lot cleverer or ye find him ye're seekin', aither here or maybe ony gaet else. Whan ye kenn'd sae weel whaur he was, I wonder ye pat yersel' aboot to speer; but what I've tauld ye is a' God's truth, every word o't, believe't or no's ye like best."

"Didn't his mother live with him? isn't she within?" inquired the doctor; while the indefatigable official added, "She'll likely be oot the gaet an' a'!"

"O yes, clever an' a' as yer freen' there is," replied Tibby, addressing the doctor, "the auld wife is in the hoose; but she's been by hersel' the last twa-three days owre the thochts o' this wife we were speakin' aboot. Yesterday she fairly took the gee, an' in a stunkert fit lockit hersel' up in her bed-room, an' hisna broken braith wi' yin o' us since. I gaed ben to hear what she was aboot, and ane wad think she was clean moon-crazy, to hear her gruntin' and grainin' like the wheel o' the auld mill, and pechin' and pantin' like a burstin' haggis. I skirl'd thro' the door to her, but she ne'er took wit she heard me; so I left her to come oot the turrivee when she likes."

"When is this wife you speak of to be home?" inquired the doctor.

"She's expectit the nicht," said Tibby; "but for yin, I've nae wish ever to see her."

"To-night!" reiterated the doctor, with marked surprise. "Is that possible?"

"It's as sure's death, every word's exack an' true," rejoined Tibby. "But they're surely a' frichtfu' leers i' the place ye come frae, that no a word o' truth can come oot onybody's mouth that ye hear speak. Tak tent o' my birds i' the oot-gaun," she added, observing her auditors turning to leave. "They're a bonny pair to come aboot a place axin' things," she said to Mrs M'Tarry, "whan a' they gie ye for yer ceevilness is tae say every word ye speak's a whackin' lee!"

The reference to Jeanie was a piece of information the doctor had not been prepared for, or expecting to meet with, and he felt so stunned as scarcely to be able to think what step next to take. They found their way into the open air again, and silently retraced their steps with all speed through the farm-yard, and got back to where they had left Benjie. He neither noticed

their approach, nor heard them, as he was making a deal of noise by drumming on the cart with his heels and whip; while he sang loudly and clearly—

He gaed hame on his stockin's their lane;
And his granny she couldna but feel
That the new worset hadna been guid,
Whan they'd gane sae sune through f' the heel.

He made a excuse for the holes;
But the puir body she had her doots,
And she fairly thocht a' wasna richt,
When he drew tae his auld Sunday boots.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Weeping, murmuring, complaining,
Lost to every gay delight;
Mira, too sincere for feigning,
Fears the approaching bridal night.
Goldsmith.

WITH one exception, all the inhabitants of Thistle Ha' were early astir on the morning of this eventful day. Eventful day, indeed! How long has it taken us to narrate the occurrences of it? and perhaps the most important yet to come! It was the day fixed to see Miss Jeanie Skeldrin, of Thistle Ha', changed into Mrs Gobbler, of Blawdreary. All of the household but Jeanie alone were up and preparing for the important ceremony, and she, the most intimately and closely connected with it, taking no interest in the matter at all! Even the hubbub, din, turmoil, and knocking about they were making in the rooms below, did not disturb her where she lay. She remained there unconscious of their noise, enjoying the repose which fatigue and anxiety had at length produced, that being the only occasion on which she had closed her eyes in sleep for several previous days and nights.

Her mother had two or three times slipped cautiously into the room where Jeanie was; but finding her asleep so soundly, she did not offer to disturb the happy repose. It afforded Mrs Skeldrin some little gratification to see her daughter so, as it led her to think that Jeanie might be getting reconciled to the lot which was in prospect for her.

It was not till the day was near the turn, and Mr

Skeldrin had gone off with his gig, to bring the young lady, who was to act as bridesmaid, and the Rev. Mr Screevinscreed, who was to officiate at the ceremony, that Mrs Skeldrin felt obliged to awaken her daughter, so that she might be in readiness on her father's return to receive those he was to have with him.

Jeanie started at hearing her mother's voice, and looked around as if surprised to find herself where she was. She had been dreaming of the doctor, and fancying herself beside him; but one look sufficed to recall her wandering senses, and dispel all pleasing illusions, and the reality of her position sprung up, and swept them remorselessly from her thoughts.

"You must get up now, Jeanie," said Mrs Skeldrin. "The day is far gone, and your father is away for Miss Urnatey and her mother. They will be here in a little, and Mr Screevinscreed with them; so, you know, it won't look well for you to be in bed when they arrive."

"I'm afraid, mother, that I'll not be able to keep up till it's all over," said Jeanie, bursting into tears. "I thought I was getting reconciled, but I feel worse now than ever."

"O, you really must not go on that way, my dear, when it has come this length," said her mother. "You know it cannot be otherwise now. Once it's over, and you are fairly away, it will be all well. You know you've had nothing to complain of regarding Mr Gobbler, and he seems very fond of you; so you'll soon learn to like him well enough after you are home, and it is a good thing you have the prospect of being so well with him."

"I hope what you say may prove true, mother," returned Jeanie; "but I cannot bear to think of it. I'll endeavour to do my best to behave properly; but I feel so excited now, that I'm afraid I will not know what I'm doing once the time comes."

"Well, I daresay you'll be all right enough, and get

through very well," said her mother, patting her kindly. "Try, like a good girl, and not make any fuss before the minister, for it will be an awful affront if you do that. It is nothing but right to be a little bashful or put-about-looking; but for any sake try and keep from crying out against the man who is to be your partner for life!"

Jeanie shuddered all over, but promised to contain her feelings, and strive to refrain from giving out any thing of this nature, as far as she possibly might be able. This so far satisfied Mrs Skeldrin, who went off to look after her household affairs, sorry enough at having had the duty of acting as comforter resting alone upon herself. Jeanie then set about getting ready as quickly as she could.

Before she had summoned courage to proceed down stairs, her father had returned, accompanied by the reverend gentleman and the two ladies already mentioned, these being the only parties intended to be present on the occasion, Mr Tawse's endeavours to procure invitations having proved a failure.

Miss Urnatey, immediately on her arrival, betook herself to the apartment of her friend, who was to require her services. The remarkable discovery of the supposed remains of the doctor's servant in the water, and the particulars of the expedition to bring her body home, were then detailed to Mrs Skeldrin by her husband and the Rev. Mr Screevinscreed, who, in the early part of the day, had heard of it, and also of the doctor's disappearance, and the return of his horse alone. Of course, this drew forth from the two ladies some showers of uncomplimentary remarks upon the doctor for his cruelty, which were mixed at due intervals with cooling admonitions and comments from his Reverence. Indeed, Mr Screevinscreed had been so impressed with the occurrence, as to have, on the way over, almost framed the groundwork of a sermon, to illustrate the impossibility of any dark deed remaining hid, when the

waters had cleared up this case after so many days had elapsed. His intended discourse, in fact, might be said to have been quite in train, except that he could not exactly see how to bring the text, referring to the "casting of bread on the waters," to apply clearly to the case in point. They got all they had to say on this subject exhausted, when it was proposed they should partake of a little refreshment; and from the unusual shortness of the blessing invoked by the reverend gentleman when this was set down, it was evident that he did not consider himself without need of a little. After it, they left the two ladies to enlarge on the doctor, or any other subject that might suit their inclinations, and Mr Skeldrin and the reverend gentleman set out on a walk over the farm, till the time appointed for the ceremony should arrive.

About the very first thing that Miss Urnatey did, on going up to Jeanie's room, was to relate to her the rumour of the body of the doctor's servant having been heard tell of. This had put Jeanie into such a state, as to cause her friend to regret exceedingly having been so rash as to speak on the subject, though, as matters were, she had never supposed it could cause uneasiness, or that the doctor would be otherwise than quite forgotten.

The two young ladies, however, were not left long by themselves after the gentlemen departed; for Mrs Skeldrin entered the room, followed by Mrs Urnatey, who had been wearying excessively to see what dress the bride was to appear in, and to have the opportunity of expressing her opinion as to whether it fitted well, and was appropriate.

Mrs Skeldrin, before ascending, had cautioned Mrs Urnatey not to allude to the doctor's servant, for fear of hurting Jeanie's feelings; but the moment they entered, they detected that it had been done by the young lady. Both the old ones then took it up, and made it serve as a soothing argument against any

outcry Jeanie might be inclined to set up about the doctor, now that his guilt was sealed for ever.

They got Jeanie equipped so much to their mind, that Mrs Urnatey pronounced the dress to be the most splendid, and thoroughly becoming for an occasion of the kind, she had ever beheld in all the course of her extensive experience in matters of the sort.

On the whole, Jeanie was now considerably composed; and unless a little paler than usual, she was all that could have been wished, so far as outward evidence could show. They went down stairs, and entered the room a minute or so before Mr Skeldrin and Mr Screevinscreed returned from their tour in the fields.

"Has Mr Gobbler not come yet?" inquired Mr Skeldrin, looking round and eyeing Jeanie with some satisfaction. "He should have been here by this time; for it is surely drawing near the hour. But he's very regular; and if he should be a few minutes late, it will only be because he will have a good deal to put to rights before he can get away. We must excuse him not being forward quite so soon as some of us would maybe like," he continued, looking towards Jeanie as he spoke; but he easily saw that his insinuation was not much relished.

Mr Screevinscreed, leaving his clerical dignity aside, in his humorous way began to put some, what he considered, rather amusing questions to Jeanie. These, though not exactly in a mood to enter thoroughly into his jocular strain, she affected to appreciate to the utmost, which afforded the reverend gentleman very great pleasure. This made him much funnier; and though he *was* a minister, he laughed very heartily, and got quite enraptured at the pleasure some of his own sayings afforded him.

Miss Urnatey, too, came in for a share of his Reverence's heavy cannonading about her beaux. This smirking young lady had, according to her own belief and her mother's accounts, been perfectly overwhelmed

with "offers." The most important of these had been made by "a foreign gentleman, who was quite crazy about her;" "a farmer, not likely to live long if she refused him;" "a flesher, generally expected to be found suspended by one of his shop-hooks if the young lady still continued stubborn;" "a young student, actually thought by the fair one to be penning an acrostic about her before he commits suicide;" and "a travelling agent of a tea-warehouse going to skin and bone about her." All these sighing for Miss Urnatey! We must explain how it arises. The crazy Californian gentleman had rudely "proposed," by asking, just in ordinary conversation, if she would like to go out there; the delicate farmer had been purchasing a horse, and had "offered," through unthinkingly remarking he thought she would look well upon it; the rope-stretching flesher had looked very lovingly upon her, as he was sawing off a swine's head one day in her mother's kitchen; the poetical student was supposed to have sent her a valentine; and the lean, empty-sausage-like traveller had rashly stated in her presence, that his wife, once he got one, would never be without a particular tea he was recommending! Such were Miss Urnatey's "offers"—the list of which might be greatly increased, but we shall just content ourselves by wishing she may take the best.

The minister next began a long initiatory lecture he had with great care prepared for the occasion, and which he had got so well by memory, as almost to make it pass for a fluent extemporaneous speech. With this Mrs Urnatey was so taken, that she sat nodding to Mrs Skeldrin every second or third word.

In this way the minutes fled, till it was half-an-hour or more past the time which had been fixed for the ceremony taking place. Mr Skeldrin now began to look somewhat uneasy, and to consult his watch very often.

"It is a very strange thing that he's so long past the time," said Mr Skeldrin, gazing on the broad face of his

chronometer with a look of concern. He rose, and walking to the window, looked earnestly in the direction whence Mr Gobbler was expected.

"You are quite sure he was aware of the hour, are you?" inquired his Reverence. "He may have thought it an hour later; and as it is now very near that, you may wait till then with all safety."

"I am rather afraid something has occurred," said Mr Skeldrin, walking incessantly and impatiently through the room. "If he does not arrive in ten minutes, I'll go and find out what's kept him."

"He or his mother may have taken ill, or he may have got himself hurt," rejoined Mrs Skeldrin; "but he should have sent word, to explain the cause of his absence."

"Perhaps he had no one to send," returned Mr Skeldrin. "Or he may have sent, and the messenger put off time, or forgot altogether. But we must not delay longer;—I'll just go over in the gig, and see myself the reason of his absence."

"What if Mr Gobbler should come when you are away?" inquired Mr Screevinscreed.

"Why, I suppose you must wait till I come back," replied Mr Skeldrin. "I fancy you are not in any very great push, and it won't be long till I return."

His Reverence was very accommodating, and declared his willingness to wait as long as might be necessary. He further added something about the pleasure it gave him being beside the ladies, which made Mrs Urnatey laugh very much, and hide her face in her handkerchief. Mrs Urnatey being a widow of so many years' standing, as would have allowed her to change her life again with all propriety, and the reverend gentleman being a bachelor, who led a lonely life with his sisters, she made it her study to relish all his jokes as much as possible. No one will surely ever venture to blame her for feeling interested in the clergyman's well-being and happiness, both of which she was perfectly prepared to

undertake the amending and improving of on a very large and triumphant scale, as soon as he might think of trying to persuade her to begin the task.

Bidding them make themselves all comfortable till his return, Mr Skeldrin prepared to depart; but ere he left the room, a shadow passed the window, a knock came to the door, and Jeanie started and fainted away.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Hope, like the glimm'ring taper's light,
Adorns and cheers the way;
And still, as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.

Goldsmith.

"YE'VE been a deevil o' a time, chaps; and back without him, for a'," said Benjie, the moment his eyes rested on the returned expedition. "Think o' me scrapin' a' the strae to ae end o' the cart, and makin' up this bit fine comfortable nest for the bonny heather lintie, to keep him cosie tell we got him safe in the cage, and you no brocht him! what's the meanin' o't? If ye werna able to manage him, I'll gae back wi' ye. I ken gart grass is gie ill to grow; but I think we could force awa his crap gie quick, for a' that."

"We could dune a' that oursel's, man, and far mair," replied Watty; "but we hinna haen the chance, for the mislear'd loon's no there to catch. It's a pity we hinna gotten the vagabon'; but we'll snap him yet, there's nae doot, if we manage richt."

"Ony word o' that lang sleeky deevil o' a woo'-clipper aither, then?" said Benjie. "His wife's awa roarin' up after him a wee sin'."

"No, man; we seen naething o' him at a'," said Watty. "The ither ane took up a' our care; but sin' ever they said he was awa to bring the wife, the doctor's hardly opened his mouth to say what he's ginna dae."

"Awa to bring the wife! the infernal ugly scoundrel," said Benjie; and, striking the pony, and wheeling it

round, like to upset the cart, he drove forward to where the doctor was standing in deep thought a few yards off.

"What d'ye intend to dae next?" said Benjie, as he started the doctor from his reverie, by nearly driving over him, in his haste to get forward.

"Lord, man!" he continued, "what gars ye stand dowie there, like a frosted tatie-shaw, when there's a chance yet o' gettin't a' made richt wi' yer bit bonny parret? It wad be a God's blessin' if ye could manage't, man; for, to tell the truth, ye hinna been yersel' since the swine ran through't. Ye're a guid sowl, and I'm sure I for ane wad like to see ye a' richt. Deevil tak ye, man! try if ye can draw yersel' into the cart, an' I'll hae ye alang in time, tho' I shouldna leave a inch o' hide on the pownie's back, or a bit o' my whip to thrash't wi'! Come awa in, man. Dear me! what need's ye be sae deen' like? Ye needna look sour aither, at a body takin' the freedom wi' ye to say a bit word or twa, tho' it is at a time when ou wad maybe be as weel keepin' our tongue to oursel'. But what's dune canna be helped; sae ye needna flyte. What are we tae dae next? What do you say—Thrissle Ha'? or

Tak the road owre which we've trod,
That lies ahint us dreigh and lang;
And hame mak way, as lang's it's day,
Or, will ye stay and hear a sang?"

"I think we've had songs enough," said the doctor, as he entered the cart, evidently lost in thought; "so we certainly wont take that course; but you can drive back to where the roads meet at any rate."

"Head up, Jumper! head up, then!" cried Benjie, applying the whip to enforce his commands; while Watty narrowly escaped being pitched over the side, as Jumper put the cart in motion, and set off very rapidly before he got properly seated.

Rattling and jolting they rolled along, and soon left Blawdreary far behind; and as they drew near where the road from Thistle Ha' ran into the one which they

were on, they descried the Thistle Ha' car coming right down towards where they were.

"Hillo! look here, doctor! here's the old cock himself," said Benjie, directly that they got near enough to recognise the driver. "What'll be up? Do you say right on, without speakin'? or will I stop? He'll guess there's something wrang when he sees you here and them that's wi' ye."

"Just go on as you're doing," said the doctor; "but stop if I say so."

"That's the ticket!" said Benjie, as he increased the pony's speed with fresh appliance of the whip. "Jist gie me the wink when ye want to stop, and I'll draw Jumper on his hurdies gie quick."

The distance between the two conveyances rapidly diminished, and Mr Skeldrin at once drew up; while he signalled to Benjie to stop likewise, which was as soon obeyed. Mr Skeldrin gazed from Benjie to the doctor, and then at Watty, with a broad astonished stare, and looking as if perfectly unable to give expression to any idea that might be on his mind.

"What's—what's—all this—what's the meaning—of—all this?" gasped Mr Skeldrin, looking wofully dejected. "What—what is't that's taken ye up to Blaw-dreary? or have you been there?"

"We have just returned from there, as you suspect, sir," replied the doctor; "and certain circumstances that have taken place within the last twelve hours render it a matter of regret that we did not get there sooner. I am glad to be able to inform you that the occurrence which put a termination to our friendship has now turned out to have arisen from a cause which you do not suspect. But though the rascally perpetrator of the vile imposition has in the meantime escaped, it is to be hoped that he may yet be brought to the punishment he deserves. I only hope that his infamy has been detected before it is too late to prevent it descending on others.

"Doctor! doctor! what have you done with Mr Gobbler?" inquired Mr Skeldrin, looking terrified beyond measure. "Your speech frightens me to think something is really wrong. Tell me, for Heaven's sake, what you've been doing!"

"I'll just explain what has happened," said the doctor, leaping to the ground, and giving Benjie directions to drive on a short way, and wait for him. He then took up a position alongside of Mr Skeldrin, and proceeded to detail all that had taken place in reference to the girl, and her lucky discovery that morning. This explained his reasons for having visited Blawdreary, and the result thereof he also made known.

A vast change came over Mr Skeldrin's manner and bearing as he heard the occurrences detailed step by step. He explained that Mr Gobbler had not reached Thistle Ha' at the time expected; but that his two friends, Messrs Gowans and Dringlepape, had arrived in a state of great excitement. This of itself convinced him of the truth of the doctor's assertions, and he began to thank his good fortune that matters had come to a stand where they did, and to hint about his own stupidity and want of discernment. While so engaged, their attention was directed to a loud screaming and noise in the direction in which Benjie had advanced.

On looking towards the place where they were, Benjie was seen standing erect in the cart waving his hand with the most furious gestures, and shouting as loud as he was able; while Watty was making his way towards them at a very rapid rate, signalling with his hat to attract their attention, and pointing back to the cart he had just left, beside which the doctor perceived that another person was now standing, to whom he drew the attention of Mr Skeldrin. Thinking it would be something very unusual to be causing such extraordinary ongoing, he requested the doctor to get up beside him, and drove towards Benjie, which Watty

having observed, he ran back again as quickly as he had advanced.

The road between Benjie's cart and where Mr Skeldrin's car had been standing was not great, and in a minute or two they got near enough to observe that the stranger was engaged in earnest conversation with Benjie. As the car reached them, the doctor perceived that the countenance of both bore traces of violent emotion; and the stranger having a dog, all covered with blood and mud, and apparently dead or dying, carrying round his neck, and holding it by the four feet in front of him, greatly added to his wild-looking aspect, and rendered his appearance on the whole very alarming.

"Here's the end o' a' noo, sir!" said Benjie, looking as sober as he ever did in his life. "But, puir sowl, I'm sort o' vext to hear how he's been borkit and chirtit."

"What do you mean?" said the doctor, looking from Benjie towards the man and back again; "what's wrong?"

"This is the shepherd we saw in the mornin'," said Benjie, speaking in a very terrified note, while Mr Skeldrin looked on aghast. The shepherd eyed the doctor as if expecting to be torn in pieces, as Benjie continued, "Gae owre the thing yersel' again; for it wad gar my bluid curdle to speak o't."

"Weel," said the shepherd, "after I left ye in the mornin', I thocht, to keep mysel' free o' a' scrapes and mischeef, that I couldna fare ony the waur o' takin' a stap round and tellin' the maister what had ta'en place, and that the lassie he gien's to keep had been ta'en awa. Sae I gaen round and seen him, and tauld him a' aboot it. He lap and swore that he wad pit me oot his service, and that he wad get me hang'd for hein' sae doited. But his passion sune gaed aff him, an' he saw it was hissel' a' to blame; so he made up his mind to set aff at ance oot the country, and pit himsel' oot o' harm's

way. He packit up what duds and things he intended to tak, and pittin' a bit napkin-fu' in the nook o' his plaid, an' giein' me anither bit bundle, we taen fit as fast's we could to the railway. We took a' the by-roads, to keep oot o' sicht as sair's we could; and we got owre maist a' our road tull we got half-way across a big braid field near the place he said he got the railway at. We war that length, when a great, big, black, lang-horn'd bull cam kickin' up the dirt an' settin' his head at us. We baith startit and ran; but tho' Rover taigled him gie sair, he began to mak hard for us just as we were drawin' near the dyke. I flang my bundle frae me, plaid and a', and my maister began lowsin' his plaid to dae the same; but something taen his fit, an' he stammer'd an' fell. When I lookit back, the bull was at him. I stoppit and turn'd, an' huntit on Rover. The puir beast here kent what was wrang, an' hung sair in, an' did a' he could; but a' wadna dae; he spelder'd hissel' in his hurry, an' was owre the bull's head in a moment, an' got hissel' near killed. Before some folk in the ither park cam up, he had turn'd on me, an' I had to set aff again; so he gaed back to the maister, an' by the time we had got him driven awa, he was borkit wi' the horns, an' champit till he was a' hashed useless. We row'd him in my plaid, and by the time we got him carried down to a house a bit aff, he was clean gane, an' his senans as firm and stiff as if he had hung dead a' nicht; so he's lyin' there, waitin' till a cart be's sent down for him."

Poor Rover, though far gone, tried to open his dim eyes, and wag his tail, as he heard his name repeated in the harsh, grating voice of his master, which, harsh as it appeared, still possessed the charm to soothe him in his inexpressible suffering.

"That is really a very melancholy affair, indeed," said the doctor, as the shepherd concluded his narrative; while Mr Skeldrin groaned a groan of commiseration, and stared as if unable to comprehend what he had

heard. He gradually got to his senses, and at length saw clearly how matters stood. He begged the doctor to accompany him home; and though the request was at first declined, yet it was repeated in such an imploring, urging strain, that he agreed, and accordingly went away to Thistle Ha', leaving the shepherd to

“Plod his weary way;”

while Benjie stood out homeward, not at first over well pleased that the doctor should have preferred any other course to returning with him.

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

See how anxious care oppresses,
See how gnawing grief distresses;
See what little makes our pain—
What little, it dispels again.
Mark how swiftly rise our woes,
When Dejection's river flows;
Mark how quick they fall away,
Melted by Hope's joyous ray.
When these rays can reach the heart,
The haze of grief will soon depart;—
While they're absent, we must wait,
Locked within Affliction's gate.

RECONSIDERING the circumstances that had induced the doctor to leave him, Benjie speedily admitted to Watty, that there was nothing in his having done so wherewith much fault could reasonably be found.

Watty coinciding in this so far, they each followed his own train of thought for a short time; when Benjie, speaking as if the solution of some difficult problem had just presented itself in comprehensible shape, turned his face towards Thistle Ha', and partly to himself, and partly to Watty, said—

"He's really a fine sowl, that—a kind-hearted, guid deevil, man! I'm gled the road's afore him, and the licht aboon him ance mair; for I thocht this jaunt wad been a tough bite for him, and no easy disgeested."

"It's no my business tae think aboot thae things," said Watty, twirling his handcuffs round his fingers, quite discontented at not having got these articles put to use.

"Is't no yer 'business'? Veign, Jumper! veign!" said Benjie, speaking to Watty, and admonishing the

pony. "It's no yer 'business,' is't no?" he repeated, as with a kind of sympathetic disdain he stared at the functionary.

"The man's maybe weel eneugh," replied Watty; "for he ne'er did me nae ill, but I've gotten nae guid through him aither."

"Stop a wee, nae! jist wait a bittie, and ye may find oot that yet," returned Benjie. "If ye ever come tae get yer skull flackter'd, or yer scaup laid open wi' a heuck, ye'll maybe ken syne. Man, whan I got the jag in my thoom, and thocht my hale arm wad loup aff me, it was gowpin' that way, look what he did. He gied it a rip up wi' a lance, and grabbel't it a' wi' a crookit thing, and row'd it up that braw, I hardly kenn'd it; and whan I asket the wheck, he jist said ne'er tae mind. He's a sowl o' the kind, that I daresay, if it wad dae guid tae ony body, he wad cut them in bits, and pit them up again, and ne'er seek a farden for his trouble. Aweel, as sune's my hand got better, I sent him owre twa-ree baskets o' garden things, thinkin' he wad jist tak them in, and say nae mair about it;—but what d'ye think? A day or twa after't, the flesher cam round wi' a creel, and a lamb-leg in't that wad sair'd a cammel or the hungriest savich in the 'Logical Garden!'"

"That was wo'th the while tho', man," said Watty, as his eye brightened. "Will he gie me onything, d'ye think?"

"I daresay, after a' yer fecht, ye wad thole something!" said Benjie, ironically. "But, losh man!" he continued, laughing as he said it, "ye're surely a meeserable hard deevil; an' if ye dinna pay me for this hurl ye've gotten in my cart, I'll fling ye oot, and let ye gang hame on yer ain feet."

"Toots, man!" said Watty, trying to look as if he had only been joking; "ye sudna mind a' I say. I'll tell ye what I've been thinkin'. I wad like if ye wad jee aff, and gang round by the house the shepherd was sayin' about; for it wad be awfu' daft-like for me no tae ca' in, and mak sure about it."

"Faith! there's nae mistak aboot it bein' owre true; there's deevil a doot o' that, I think," said Benjie. "But it looks tae me that ye're baith keen o' glowrin', and hae little tae turn yer curoosity tae. For my part, I wadna dae ony sic thing; but if ye want, say the word."

"It—wad—be—as—weel—then," said Watty; "for, ye see, unless the like o' me attends tae thae matters, wha's tae dae't?"

To please the officer, Benjie accordingly turned away by an intersecting road, and arrived before the little, lone, time-worn, and neglected-looking road-side cottage to which the shepherd had referred.

Benjie kept his seat, to observe the proceedings, and the officer alighted to make his duty-imposed inspection. He knocked solemnly on the tender, worm-pierced, old fir boards that formed a barrier to entrance, by partially filling the gap that had been left, to serve the purpose of a door to this singular domicile. No notice was taken; all was quiet; and the blows were repeated a little firmer. Still there was no answer, and Watty signified his surprise at this by giving his head a very slight motion, and again causing another series of very loud blows to shake the tottering door.

"This'll no dae, tho'," he said, as he found his efforts still unheeded, and attempted to lift the latch. "I maun see aboot this."

Hinting his suspicion that they had been misinformed through mistake or deception, he stepped to the window, to ascertain whether the prospect through the dust-covered, thick, bulls'-eyed panes would facilitate the attaining of the information he was in quest of.

Benjie, while all this was going on, kept quiet; and as he wanted to see and observe Watty's doings, he eyed his proceedings very closely.

"Ha! ha! that'll no pass wi' me, my woman!" said Watty, turning round exultingly to Benjie. "There's somebody here yet, aither sleepin' or no willin' to come oot; but I'll sune fetch them tae their senses."

To carry this lost-faculty-restoring process into force, he took out his baton, and administered several very loud blows to the door, and then listened to mark the result.

"*That* should be heard, at ony rate," interposed Benjie, who was also now a little interested in the proceedings, as the circumstances attending their visit appeared singular, considering the reported occurrence, and the certainty of their being at the proper house indicated by the shepherd.

"Ay, I've managed it noo!" said Watty, as he at length heard a low shuffling sound within.

"Pussey! pussey! pussey!" cried a *vioce*, speaking very coaxingly behind the door; "puir cheetie! keep quiet, pussey!"

"What the deevil's the meanin' o' that, think ye?" said Watty, staring as if unable to comprehend the singular response.

"Stop till I hearken," said Benjie, alighting and listening as the calls to pussey went on. "I dinna see through't aither."

"Tuts!" he exclaimed, after a moment or two, "I see't. It's Deef Lizzie, man;" and he gave the door a loud rattling shake.

It was thereupon cautiously opened a short way, while the calls to the cat were still continued in a more coaxing strain. But the old woman, seeing she had been mistaken, set back the door as far as it would go, and turning up her face at an angle, as if to show to proper advantage the bearded wart that grew on her chin, she said, by way of explanation, "Pate gaed gyte owre the corp, and ou shut him oot till keep him frae yokin' on't; for he's dreadfu' ravenish and savich whan he's aside a flown speerit."

"A's square yet, then," said Watty, as this was delivered. "I'll jist stap in a minute, an' gie ae keek."

"Doun tae the toun; sud be shawin' face in a jiffie,"

said the deaf woman, imagining they were asking for the mistress of the mansion.

"What way are ye here the day, Lizzie?" roared Benjie at the top of his voice. "Ye're far frae hame?"

"Awfu' sicht! awfu' sicht!" said the old woman. "Mony a death I've seen, but this's been the sairest, suddentest ane this lang time. Loshins o' me! but there's mony a bole the sparks o' life are chirtit oot by. It's no easy sayin' the airt the skelp's tae come aff that'll set it fleein' awa," she continued, as she rubbed her nose with her prominent knuckles as firmly and earnestly as if she had been endeavouring to remove that organ from its position on her face.

Pate, a rough, grey, unprepossessing-looking brute of his kind, wanting one eye, and all ruffled as if he had been drawn by the tail through a narrow hole, rushed up while the old woman was speaking, and attempted to storm the entrance. In this he was frustrated by Watty, who came out from his inspection at the moment, and drove him back, greatly to the relief of Lizzie, who retired precipitately, and made the door secure again.

Watty having declared himself as perfectly satisfied, and made a note of the time, they continued their journey. During it, the officer maintained a close silence, as he was endeavouring to arrange mentally a report of his day's doings, which he meant to forward to head-quarters.

A short way on, they encountered Widow Skull-whistle, the inhabitant of the place where Mr Gobbler's remains lay. She entered on an intricate narration of the event that had led to Mr Gobbler's decease, and informed them that she had left her house in charge of Deaf Lizzie, while she had been at the village on an errand of her own. This left no doubt that the report would be spread there, as, from her quick, voluble style of talking, she was quite as well qualified to set the village in an uproar as many of its news-retailing

inhabitants. Watty did not like this, as he had expected to create a sensation himself on his arrival in Bramble-Green; so he told her, in a rather petted and displeased voice, that he was aware of all the particulars long before, and requested Benjie to "drive on oot o' her gaet, as a auld wither'd-lookin' jail-dyke docken like her wasna wo'th the like o' him fashin' his head wi'."

Symptoms of Mrs Skullwhissle's visit having alarmed the village, were quite apparent the moment our friends arrived within view of it. People were seen rushing here and there, and small groups collected about the doors; and when the cart passed through, interrogations flowed in abundantly on all sides, while Watty's explanations were in such extensive request, as almost to restore his good humour. This Benjie kindly allowed him every opportunity of regaining, as, knowing his liking for being thought of consequence, he either allowed the officer to reply, or referred his answers to Watty's approval in the course of their delivery, though at the same time he mixed up and told what he had to say on his own account to no less advantage.

Miss Golloch had been anxiously awaiting the return of the doctor from the expedition to Blawdreary, and many were the harassing, torturing thoughts that seized and preyed on her agitated mind during his absence. These, too, it appeared, had been much heightened by the report about Mr Gobbler which had reached the village before Benjie's arrival, as just alluded to.

After Mrs Skullwhissle's visit, Meg had picked up a smattering of the rumour; but somehow she had mistaken the real facts, and in retailing them over to Miss Golloch, had made her references so mysteriously, that Miss Golloch had been led to believe the reported injury had been sustained by the doctor. To get her uneasiness set at rest on this point, Miss Golloch had desired Willie to keep look-out for the return of the cart, and acquaint

her what might be the upshot of the alluded-to accident. But the cart having reached the village by a side-road whence it had not been expected, its arrival was described by Meg, and the startling truth, that only two people were in it, was instantly telegraphed to Miss Golloch. This put her greatly about, and increased her anxiety much; but luckily relief was at hand, and sadness was not long permitted to hold his sway, as Benjie, making the best of his way through among his numerous friends, reached the house, and he and Watty speedily got her fears allayed.

Soon thereafter they arrived home, the tired pony was released from his yoke, and Benjie set about retailing to his wife and Mrs Curmuddie what had come under his notice while away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It's now the fortune of our friends,
In spite of tides and adverse winds,
To brave the storm they greatly fear'd,
And reach the port for which they steer'd.

LITTLE of our narrative now remains untold. The arrival of the doctor at Thistle Ha' at the time such an occurrence was so little expected, though arising from such an unlooked-for cause, turned out every way a thousand times more welcome to all concerned, than if Mr Skeldrin's journey had resulted in what he had been led to undertake it for. Mr Gobbler's cruel and untimely fate called forth no tear of sympathy; and beyond a few expressions of regret that he should have perished in such a way, no mourn or lament was made for him by those who, if a few days longer had passed before matters were cleared up, would likely have had more trying reasons for distress.

Mr Skeldrin was very loud in his expressions of regret, that he had been so hard-hearted and overbearing as to force his only and much-beloved daughter to the brink of misery, in the face of all her solicitations, as well as against the wish of his wife, whom he knew to have been opposed to it at heart.

By degrees, he managed to get out of his sorrowful spirit, and his joy at the fortunate turn the events had taken overleapt all bounds. He even went the length of protesting that his wife was a perfect Solomon, and threatened to leave his own future guidance, and that of every thing else he possessed, or had anything to do with, entirely under her directions and control.

Everything now went on in a way every one could have wished, and to the satisfaction of everybody, with the exception of Mr Tawse. He alone was sorely chagrined and distressed at seeing the doctor get out of his difficulties, and back again to Thistle Ha'.

A short though reasonable time being allowed to intervene after the death of Mr Gobbler, the small party, a little increased, and headed by Mr Screevinscreed, again found their way to Thistle Ha', with a similar purpose in view to that which had formerly drawn them together. There had been no melancholy, downcast faces in Thistle Ha' that morning; and

"The grief that knew not consolation's name,"

had no place in Jeanie's feelings that day! No; among the glad and buoyant spirits that danced on the sea of happiness encircling them, there was none kept the surface so lightly and gaily as she. That afternoon, there was no aversion to looking out at the window down the road, and no shuddering if any one appeared in sight. When the rap came to the door, no fainting fits occurred, to throw alarm over the assemblage; and the jokes, soaked in Mr Screevinscreed's reverential spicery, all gave unfeigned satisfaction, and were participated in by Jeanie with the greatest delight. She and the doctor were firmly united by the reverend gentleman, and Mr and Mrs Skeldrin had the gratification of seeing the coach, bearing Mr and Mrs Golloch, roll as smoothly away from Thistle Ha' as the rough road permitted.

This happy occurrence threw Mr Tawse off his balance altogether; and as the doctor and his wife passed rapidly through the village, he got so angry and infuriated, that he flogged into hysterics, and nearly killed outright, half the scholars at the school, for having cheered the carriage in passing, after his positive command to keep strictly silent. It is difficult to say where his fury might have ended, had it not been for the for-

fortunate arrival of Watty, the policeman, who chanced to look round for the purpose of getting his strict discharge of duty certified. His appearance at the school-door, whether it struck terror to the heart of Mr Tawse or not, at any rate brought his hurricane of rage down to a sweet and complacent calm, and he signed the requisite notification with greater alacrity, and a more pleasant smile than usually afflicted his sour, overbearing countenance when performing such an extensive service to the poor constable gratis.

On the same day that saw the doctor and Jeanie united, and depart on their marriage trip, Willie and Katie were also joined in the bonds of matrimony. This made Willie, according to his mother's doctrine, "a complete man," her opinion being that either a wife or a grey head was necessary, before the term "laddie" could be done away with in strict propriety.

It was a glorious event for Benjie, who, at the supper furnished at the doctor's expense, sang more songs while he was sober, than he had done on any single occasion before. He danced with Mrs Curmuddie till she nearly fainted, and drank more whisky than he had ever done free of charge in the whole course of his extensive practice. He got so thoroughly done up, that Charlie and Watty crushed him into the cradle, where he lay insensible for some hours, with his feet hanging over the side; while Watty sat blinking through his dim, whisky-closed optics, attempting to rock the sleeper asleep, and to sing a rhyme to facilitate repose. The rhyme was neither very instructive nor yet amusing, being merely a disconnected and unfinished history of a mouse, whose travelling propensities had induced it to visit a clock-head, with no notice either of its purpose or what it did when there, further than that it reached that place, and speedily descended again about one o'clock, on a day not named. But his song of the evening, which was several times sung, and oftener *encored* than he was able to reply to, we shall give at

length, as it refers to some of his private peculiarities and likings. It ran as follows :—

Some likes cauld beef,
Some likes ham—
Some likes boil'd eggs,
But I like lamb.
I likes lamb?
Yes! I says't:
Jist let dooters
Come and see me taste!

Some likes laif-bread,
Some likes scones—
Some likes herrin'-milts,
But I like roans.
I likes roans?
Yes! I says't:
Jist let dooters
Come and see me taste!

Some likes coffee,
Some likes tea—
Some likes twa cups,
But I like three.
I likes three?
Yes! I says't:
Jist let dooters
Come and see me taste!

Some likes kirk'd milk,
Some sweet detest—
But I like a' things,
An' guid things best.
Guid things best?
Yes! I says't:
Jist let dooters
Come and see me taste!

All the time he declared, as he rocked himself to and fro in concert with the cradle, that it was the finest amusement he had enjoyed for many a day; and that the occupant of the cradle became it so well, that he had never before seen him to such advantage.

Though Charlie was not exactly addicted to excessive drinking, still insitieny was not a confirmed quality in

his constitution. He too very soon got much affected with the grog, and became so shaky that he could not manage to catch his mouth in its passages back and forward; and had Mrs Curmuddie not taken pity on him, and steadied his head, and poured the liquor in, he might have gone home only "half-seas over," for all the whisky that was at his mercy. He was very merry and cheerful the whole night for a man of his quiet turn, and did all he could to facilitate their mirth. His endeavours towards this were made principally by narrating dark and wonderful anecdotes connected with his calling, such as a hearse-driver being thrown off the seat, and getting his neck broken; a mason getting crushed to death while erecting a headstone; or a child falling over the gallery of the church, and alighting dead on the floor below, just a yard or two from where he had been standing at the time. But the most important of his tales was, a singular account of how he redeemed the character of a servant, in the eyes of her jealous mistress. It appeared that this lady had been unable, after her husband's decease, to find a silver snuff-spoon he had been using on his death-bed, and had accused the servant of pilfering that covetable article. This suspicion had stained her name many a year, and might have stuck to her all her life, had Charlie not one day thrown up a skull, and discovered the long-lost piece of plate sticking in the nose of it! With true honesty within him, he had carried it and the skull to the disconsolate widow, who recollected that the hand of the departed had been found near his nose at the time she ascertained his life had ceased. All these, and other singular cases that had called his digging powers into operation, were particularly favourite themes with him. They were what he liked best to talk about, and generally served as a limit to his fun. But on this special occasion, at the urgent solicitations of Watty, he did actually enliven the company with a song—a piece of such unusual levity on his part, and

considering that it was his own composition, we shall give it as it fell from his hollow voice :—

First nick round the sides,
Then peel aff the divot,
And row't round yer stick,
If at hand ye hiv it.

Then yoke tae wi' shoals—
Whip it down tae four feet;
But see ye throw the mools
No owre far oot-owre frae't.

Snod the edges square;
Lay yer ropes a' ready—
For they should be there,
So's tae lower steady.

Haul them oot again,
Then fling in the mools,
Syne clap on the divot,
And fetch awa yer tools.

Mrs Curmuddie too, though she could not by any means be said to have either a harmonious or musical voice, volunteered to "sing" a song, by way of an inducement to Watty to give another repetition to his one after the conclusion of Charlie's. The performance was done with such good will, that not to give her song a place would be an act of gross injustice to the mother of the bride, so it is inserted here accordingly—

Fierce Coggie, the cooper, that dwalt in the howe,
Was the crossest auld deevil that e'er claw'd a pow.
He married a wife jist on purpose to flyte,
And tae hae her at hand when he pour'd oot his spite.
But lucky come tooral, luggies an' a',
Sulky auld Coggie got new grund tae claw!

They passed ae day pleasant, anither ane easy,
Thae twa was a heap, but the third ane got breezy;—
Intendin' tae show her a bit o' his micht,
He gaed tae his bed first, and blew oot the licht.
But lucky come tooral, luggies an' a',
Sulky auld Coggie got new grund tae claw!

The wife she was cross, and she lik'd nae the dark,
 Sae she lichted in quietness without ony wark,
 And gaed ben to the shop, and arrang'd the auld bed
 That had stood a' neglected since Coggie got wed.
 Lucky come tooral, luggies an' a',
 Sulky auld Coggie got new grund tae claw!

She slippit his claes frae the chair whaur they lay—
 Pat them ben tae the shop to be oot o' his way;
 Took the key tae the inside, a' ready to throw,
 And the blankets a' aff him she whippit awa.
 Lucky come tooral, luggies an' a',
 Sulky auld Coggie got new grund tae claw!

She lock'd hersel' in, an' lay down at her ease,
 Cryin' "Think ye that you'll dae wi' me as ye please?
 My lad, I'll pit up nae wi' nae siccan wark!"
 And she left him to chitter a' nicht in his sark.
 Then lucky come tooral, luggies an' a',
 Sulky auld Coggie got new grund tae claw!

Mrs Corphoodie had been invited to the wedding at Mrs Curmuddie's special desire, but it was not till the proceedings were far advanced that she made her appearance in a wofully dejected condition. A stocking was tied up from below her chin over her ears, to keep the cold out of these organs; and round her neck a pair of flannel drawers were warped, and fastened in front with the prongs of a table-fork from which the handle had been broken. Panting, and performing an elaborate series of coughing, she took a seat with so much concern in her face, that Mrs Curmuddie's notice was instantly attracted by her unusual bearing. "Here's—here's—here's a dreadfu' mishapper," said Mrs Corphoodie, elevating her right hand, which was muffled up in an infant's nightcap, and only her thumb visible. "I've haen the awfu'est tae-dae ever's come alongst me i' my life," she continued. "I've jist been a' last nicht an' this mornin' watchin' on Miss Chowlers's brither, an' i' the efternoon there ou thocht his speerit was gane. Losh! ye ken he had a silver-muntit teeth i' his mooth, and his sister didna want it tae be gaun tae the graff

wi' him. Aweel, ye ken, as lang's he was loo-warm, I began tae tak it oot, no to be batherin' forcin' his jaw-blades open after he was cauld; sae, whan I was busy, he gaur'd his mooth play flap tae jist like a sawmont, an' he's nippet twa o' my fingers near about through. Was ever the like kenn'd? an' for as deen's he was, he may hing on guid-kens-hoo-lang, he's haen sae mony terrivees back and forrit. My gracious! I've pat on a pultice o' puddock-stools; but, wae dearucks! I may be pushened for a'!" Mrs Corphoodie was trembling violently by the time she halted in her narration; but being assured that there was every prospect of speedy recovery from her injury, she got wonderfully round after a glass or two, and in her own style enjoyed herself as well as any other person present.

The village boys, determined that nothing should be wanting to add to the interest and amusement of the happy company, and at the same time give themselves an opportunity to enjoy the dulcet strains of Cockie Cheeper's fiddle, and satisfy their own tastes for fun and recreation, succeeded, after attempts at entrance by the door had failed, in getting one of their nimblest associates hoisted to the house-top. Mrs Curmuddie's cat having followed her along, and been left outside, was then handed up, and dropped down the chimney with remarkable dexterity. A bunch of straw was then carefully inserted in the chimney-can, and the urchin descended.

Luckily for poor puss, the fire had just been newly mended, and she found her way down with little damage. But she caused a considerable commotion among the company below, as she chanced to alight on the face of "wee Jamie," who had been rolling on the hearth-mat at the time, and who set up such a howling as soon drew the attention of all who were able to look up, to the newly-arrived visitor. His mother half thought it would be another apparition; but Mrs Curmuddie recognised the stranger, and was quite over-

joyed at the appearance of her favourite. She warmly pronounced it to be the "exterornereest kind-hearted brute in the world," and such a "guid-natur'd, fine-feeling'd idiwut," that she believed after it had gone this length for her, it would "follow her to the gallows!" But when the smoke began to gather, and get pretty cloudy and coughingly troublesome, and the boys without commenced to set up louder yells, the true state of the matter became apparent. The window was put up, to let the smoke escape; but was let down with a crash by those outside, who tied it down, or prevented its being raised again. This brought those inside to a parley; when the disturbers agreed that they would remove the cause of the nuisance if the door were opened, and they got liberty to enter and see the fun. But if this liberty were not to be granted, the chimney was to remain stopped up, the door to be fastened with a rope, and the inmates left to their fate! None of the male members of the company, not even the august official, being in a fit state to render any great assistance in inducing or compelling the unruly youngsters to cease their freaks, Mrs Artichoke undid the door, after getting them to promise to behave. Wild Alick, the sweep's son, then removed the obstruction from the vent, and they all entered and amused themselves with Cockie, to his great delight, as they knew how to please him by praising his performances. This they did to such an extent, that, drunk as he was, he managed to get to his feet, and danced and kicked in company with them, and played so furiously as to threaten the destruction of his instrument. His musical reign was not of very long duration, for a youngster who had a taste for displaying his own abilities, made an attempt to secure the fiddle, and in the scuffle all the hairs were torn out of the bow. This catastrophe brought the catgut groans to an end, and left the field clear for the vocalists, whose further contributions were so mixed and huddled, that any reference to them, without spoiling

their reality, would require to be made unintelligible. Therefore, as any translation, or attempt at elucidation, would rob them of their chaotic confusion and incomprehensible beauty, we shall leave them to the imaginations of those who can picture a score of different voices all shouting on separate subjects, as to them may perhaps be suggested, a description to suit themselves.

Without any other very unusual misfortunes or accidents, this remarkable entertainment concluded. A slight rencounter fell to Mrs Curmuddie's share, after its termination. She happened to have been escorted home by Watty, or to have escorted him; and this breach of decorum, it seemed, aroused the jealousy of his better-half to an intensely fierce pitch. She was so excited at this preposterous conduct, that she attacked Mrs Curmuddie in her passion, and did not observe that it was her infant child she was striking with right and left, and using as a weapon of chastisement, till its cries attracted her notice. Luckily for it, she stopped in time to prevent its receiving much damage, or Mrs Curmuddie getting hurt by it. It is nothing but justice to Mrs Curmuddie to state, that in this attack she only acted on the defensive, and did the best she could to save both the child from injury and herself from being hurt. While she did so, she called loudly and earnestly to her assaulter to "pit down the wean, and tak her nieves to it, and she would settle her;" but Mrs Baton, knowing she would have little chance of success with her stalwart friend in fair fight, felt no inclination to renew the combat, though Mrs Curmuddie, with the utmost politeness, invited her to do so. Mrs Baton having got the first impulse of her fury over, regretted her impetuosity, and apologized for her furious conduct, and the absurd way she treated Mrs Curmuddie, after her kindness in taking home the village protector; so they parted good friends, notwithstanding this little disturbance. The officer once got within doors, his wife had little trouble putting him to bed, as beyond stubbornness and excess-

sive self-will, there were no other remarkable traits in his intoxicated character. All she had to do to make him retire, was only to shut the folding-doors of the bed, and place a chair before it, telling him while she did so that he would not get in there that night. Dictating in this way did not suit him, and as soon as he managed to struggle out of his robes, he ceased very shortly to give further trouble that night.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Sin' ye maun gae to leave us, we maun bid ye a' adieu!
The fond fareweel reluctant flows, as ye recede frae view.
We maun leave ye to yersel's again, where'er ye wish to go—
Nae langer we can follow, to share your joy or woe.

WE must now take farewell with all our friends, whose fortunes and fates it has been our task to trace and follow in the course of their adventures.

Of the marriage of Dr Golloch and Miss Skeldrin we have nothing to state, except that the joys with which they were both enshrined went far to overthrow the narrow bounds to which love and happiness have by some been restricted; and from the share of both which fell to their lot, there is room to doubt whether these enviable states can still continue to be

“On earth unseen, or only found
To warm the turtle's nest.”

The union of Willie and Katie was also equally fortunate in laying the foundation of similar results; and to one person at any rate, if not more, it afforded unbounded satisfaction, by preventing Katie getting back to the doctor's service. This was the stoic Meg O'Zookerty, whose misanthropic mind had somehow got greatly softened at the various changes passing under her notice, and in particular the new light in which the turn of events showed the doctor, tended to alter her views of mankind very much. Indeed, when she saw that among men there were really such excellent ones as she now set down the doctor to be, she fell to con-

sidering which of her neglected "offers" she could fall back upon with the greatest chance of success.

Poor Butterscales did not know what to do when he ascertained the news of the overturn, and acquittal of the doctor from all the evil imputations laid upon him. He walked up and down his shop, and snuffed so much, that his waistcoat and shirt-front were quite covered with his best "taddy," and the hinges of his German-silver box got quite loose with the frequent opening and shutting. He sold such "large half-ounces" of sugar and tea that day to his poor customers, that some of them thought his living long after it was excessively problematical. Lump-Sugar was quite terrified when an old, often-before-turned-adrift, hungry, death-like, friendless beggar crawled into the shop, armed with a copper representation of a long dead king, which his palsified hand and empty stomach knew from experience was the only passport to the well-stocked bread-rack. We say that the shop boy grew alarmed. No wonder! instead of the general command, "If he has a hap'ny, give him a roll," the cry was, "Give him a last week's roll for a farth—no; you may assist him to one!" He wished, as he trotted back and forward, that Mrs Butterscales had not been in such a hurry with the twins; asked her repeatedly whether there was nothing wrong with them, or if their mouths would not require the doctor's help to set the teeth free. He could not make up his mind how to evince his reconciliation, till he had given himself an awful amount of bodily and mental exertion; and when he did alight on the form in which his pleasure should be expressed, it was sent out of his shop, represented by a dozen or eighteen large, hard, dried cod-fish, and a jar half-full of turpentine!

Mr Chizzle kept his wife awake all night, asking and considering what he could do that would benefit the doctor, without giving offence to Mr Tawse, and have the least chance of being found out by that inveterate

individual. He got the several ways that occurred to him reduced to two, between which his inclination flitted undecidedly. These were whether he should send a stone drinking-trough for the doctor's horse, or get Mr Studdie to fabricate a scraper, with an eel twined round each side, and fasten it into the doctor's door-step. He chose the former, unfortunately for himself, as it proved to be. The day following his coming to this conclusion, he went to the quarry, to give instructions about a proper slab for the purpose being broken out. He walked quietly in, and seeing no one, he took out his watch to learn whether the time of day would account for this singularity. Not thinking why the quarry was so solitary and deserted, he slowly proceeded to a place where a number of tools lay, amidst traces of recent use. A shout of alarm was sounded as he reached this spot; but it came, alas! too late. A loud report followed, masses of rock flew in all directions; and when they had reached the ground again, Mr Chizzle lay among them, mangled and lifeless! A "blast" had just been charged and lit immediately before his arrival, and all the men had retired out of danger; and it being windy at the time, his approach had not been heard, and they did not observe him soon enough to give the necessary warning. He was interred in a distant churchyard—a proceeding, it is thought, Charlie will never forgive. It depressed him much at the time; and, notwithstanding Mrs Corphoodie's pleasing allusion, in which she attempted to impart some consolation, by assuring him there were "as guid fish i' the sea as ever cam oot o't," he persisted in maintaining that his rights had been "ta'en owre his head, for nae faut he ever did in his life;" and that "they micht say an' mak ony excuses they likit aboot it bein' better takin' folk beside their freends, it wad ne'er drive him tae the believin' that them that was gane kent or car'd wha was pat aside them, or fash'd their heads wi't."

Dr Plyphleme, notwithstanding the tough, leathery

obstacle that had impeded free or any other intercourse with Dr Golloch, set about distilling from his professional experience a thorough, proper draught of reconciliation, and paving the duct by which he might be able to make it most easily available. It was whispered that for this end, he had made some deep and ingenious researches into the extensive territories of his whimsical imagination, and that some mysterious, ill-to-arrive-at proposition in reference to Miss Golloch had been finally chased into a corner and secured. But Dr Plyphleme was not always easily understood; and for that reason, it is probable that some doubt upon his intentions may for a long time have opportunity to rest undisturbed. He has, nevertheless, been heard to testify, that he thought Miss Golloch "a very nice lady;" so there is no saying what a bachelor gentleman of his peculiar disposition may take it into his head to attempt! The housekeeper, too, is beginning to get a little agitated on the floating surmises, and to complain that more fault is found with her doings than formerly; and by oblique inference, it is towards Miss Golloch that this result is soberly attributed, and believed to incline.

Mrs Artichoke and Mrs Curmuddie, finding the transpired results contrary to those interpreted as having been predicted by the dream and their visionary indications, a new revisal was rendered absolutely necessary. Both admitted the mistakes quite freely, but wondered very much why they had been so stupid as read the dream wrong, when they were both engaged at it, and especially as what had been the right reading thereof was so clear now! Their new version was, that the carpets had truly enough been the difficulties between the doctor and Katie, as they had before said; but all that she had done more than he, only showed that she was to put the real matters right, as she had done the floor-cloth in her dream. The "springs" were still the grave; but how very stupid they had been, not to see that it was neither for the doctor nor Katie,

when they had, in the dream, both been alive beside it! The un-peeled sticks showed that both the doctor and Katie were to be acquitted, without the least vestige of slight upon them requiring removal. But for having failed to interpret the obvious prediction of the fate of Mr Gobbler, as the extinguishing of the candle had so clearly betokened, they were ashamed to submit excuses or anything in palliation of their excessive ignorance!

Benjie, to testify his joy, decided on "makin' a day," and going with his cart to Drift Valley, and taking Cockie Cheeper with him, to have a complete rehearsal of the musical abilities of Larry O'Grunter, and a good spree with them on its conclusion, and perhaps have an opportunity of hearing the "Blue Rat" performed by the "boy" who was reported to do it such infinite justice, that the accomplished Larry admitted his inferiority in its execution.

Watty! the untiring Watty, after everything had been adjusted, as he no doubt thought, entirely through his exertions, took an early opportunity of going down to acquaint the miserly Mr Yirdworm where his potato-protecting rag-erection was to be found. He did this for the double purpose of preventing the farmer raising an outcry, and troubling him about it, and to obviate the catastrophe prophesied by Benjie, when he heard what the remarkable body of Mr Handcuff had turned out to be.

The Rev. Mr Screevinscreed having escorted Mrs Urnatey and Miss Golloch home from Thistle Ha' on the marriage day, he visited the former lady pretty regularly and frequently after it; but whether intentionless or resultless, has not clearly flared out. This darkness and secrecy Mrs Curmuddie attributes to the fact, that Mrs Urnatey being a widow, makes her exceptionally wide awake, and not likely to let out more than serves to keep up an interesting suspicion, or less than will maintain it.

The sermon the reverend gentleman meant to preach

was never thoroughly matured, as he had to leave out the "bread on the waters," on hearing the true account; but he managed to refer to, and illustrate the matters that had taken hold of his mind so forcibly, by adroitly combining them with discourses on the return of the dove to the ark, coupled with Saul's expedition after the wandering portion of his father's stud. Most unfortunately, it chanced that this series of eloquent renderings had, on the several days of their delivery, occupied more time than was generally devoted to the purpose of enlightening the congregation, and this had given unbounded offence to sundry members of that august body. Several of the irreverent elders saw proper to dislike the somewhat lengthy prayers, consequent on these special occasions, as they had been unluckily intending to dine together on these days. Perhaps it did not arise from irreligious or gluttonous motives; but they had got concerned, lest their dinners would be cool before getting back from church! Will it be credited, that a detachment of this unmanageable body actually found courage to wait upon the worthy clergyman, and hint the existence of their displeasure, and threaten to seek spiritual nutriment in another quarter, unless some change followed? The minister could not succeed in drawing from them objections to anything he had ever done. He pled and entreated them to explain the grounds of dissatisfaction that existed; but they felt almost ashamed to acknowledge the childish fact. One of them, bolder than his neighbours, ingenuously stated, that he "didna get sune eneeugh hame, and couldna help turnin' hungry." The good man, thinking this a tolerable joke, humorously suggested breakfasting later; but this gave offence to the esurient donkeys, who retired, pretending to be grievously displeased. The text about the "house divided against itself" was resorted to the following Sunday, in the expectation of convincing them that such like rickety fabrics were dangerous, and could not by

any possibility endure; but all Mr Screevinscreed's efforts only resulted in setting wider the partitions that threatened to disturb the stability of the mansion of his spiritual calling. "Crooked and perverse," in every sense, will remain the congregation of Bramble-Green; and we sincerely pity Mr Screevinscreed, who has the disagreeable and hopeless task of bettering their state, left to his charge!

Miss Urnatey, always captivating some one, wafted off another sigher at the marriage of the doctor! Her mamma and Miss Golloch being left to the charge of the minister, she and a Dr Sklentyleggs, who had been at the ceremony acting an important part by Dr Golloch's side, went home by the longest way they could think of. Dr Sklentyleggs gave her a very elaborate and interesting convoy, and held her as firmly and professionally round the neck, as if the compression of, and stoppage of the circulation in, her carotid artery, or some close anatomical researches in the regions of her throat, had been his most serious wish. Miss Urnatey was very much taken with Dr Sklentyleggs' "offer," thus imparted, and almost unhesitatingly felt called upon to relinquish the farmer, the Californian, the student, the traveller, the flesher, and a great array of others, for the sake of this favoured individual. His unintended insinuating was so successfully performed, that the trepan of his wiles had perforated her heart and head in all directions; and when he bid her adieu, and held her hand as firmly as if a professor had been standing by to take up the squirting tubes after amputation, she could scarcely avoid fainting and falling into his arms. She did not tell her mother all that had passed on the way, but the shrewd and experienced old lady had conjectures not far from the truth. They held a consultation on this adjunct to the candidates, and honoured him, and acknowledged his superiority, by placing him at the head of the list, to remain there till displaced by another, or till such time as Miss

Urnatey should be prepared to embark in the matrimonial canoe, which she modestly said she was in no earthly hurry about, and which her mother pretended not to be disposed to allow for an indefinite period, and for reasons she erroneously thought no one had any correct idea of.

Rover got better, but had himself nearly killed again by Robbie, when down in Bramble-Green one day with his amiable proprietor, who had done Benjie the honour of a call. After the scuffle with Robbie, he fell in with Mrs Curmuddie's cat going through the village, and brought out that lady in an awful fury on Mawcum, who was so thoroughly dumfounded, that he could not find courage to say a word in return. Indeed, he got so completely awe-struck as to be unable to spit; and the large chew he had been indulging in, off his freshly-purchased ounce, accumulated in his mouth till his face swelled, and all the sensations of choking arose. He got out of the village, heartily glad to find that there were even worse and more ill-natured women in the world than Recchie; for he had heard nothing from her all his life to equal the five minutes' blowing up from Mrs Curmuddie. It seemed, frightened as he was, that he had been well off too, for Mrs Curmuddie did not know who he was at the time; and she was heard to observe regrettingly, that "she wished she had only kent wha the wilyart win'le-strae was, as she had a word or twa that wad maybe hae diverted him a wee mair than a' he got."

Mr Gobbler's career having been closed as it was, we shall not venture

"Lightly to talk of his spirit that's gone,
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him;"

or in any way lessen the little lament that followed his decease, from any quarter excepting from his mother, who perhaps grieved enough, though her outcry was confined to her own hearing.

The remarkable letter was not thought to be the calligraphy of Mr Gobbler himself, but was supposed to have been executed by some of the members of his establishment, though no trouble was taken to unravel the mystery; neither were the exact intentions he had had in view regarding the girl particularly inquired into. The owner of the head whence the hair had been got never cast up to claim it. Benjie thought Mrs M'Tarry's hair remarkably like Katie's; and Watty always said that Tibby's at Blawdreary was "the very same;" so there was a probability that one or other conjecture might be correct.

The circumstances brought to light through the lucky misfortune that befel Benjie and his son, on "THE MISTY MORNING," gave nearly unlimited gratification to all, with one exception—not applying to Mr Tawse and family, who are well understood to have been displeased, without special notice of that fact here again. But it turned round either from causes relating to this matter, or some unaccountable inducement, that Mr Tawse and family shortly afterwards made up their minds to bid their

"Native land good-night,"

and set off to Australia, where matrimonial connections are perhaps easier formed. Implacable as he always was, it is singular that, before leaving, he swayed a little towards the doctor, and called in to see and take the advice of Mr Butterscales on a subject that was perplexing him in reference to that gentleman. After a lengthy and mysterious interview, the apprentice was dispatched to Mr Tawse's with a large box, which had once been filled with "*Butterscales' Ho-ang-ho Boatman's Congou—a favourite mixture of the Celestial Emperor.*" This receptacle was returned again to the charge of Mr Butterscales, firmly nailed down, and addressed to Dr Golloch, with instructions to be delivered to him after Mr Tawse should be away at sea. Great attention was

requested to be paid to this package while in the merchant's possession, and in particular he was asked to see that it was not turned otherwise than "this side up." When Mr Tawse had been gone some days, it was with great ceremony delivered, with an apology that had been left for its necessitated large size. The lid was wrenched off with a great deal of curiosity, and from the recesses were drawn forth, a long ruler, which stretched from corner to corner of the box; a table of the "Apothecaries' Weight," framed in what had once contained a looking-glass; a case of steel pens; a number of empty vials, and a blacking bottle carefully covered with the skin of a misbehaved pupil's playing ball. This was found to contain a leech, celebrated for its ready-biting qualities, which Mr Butterscales explained had been fully tested in removing a "blue eye" Mr Tawse had got through the unexpected springing of a mole-trap. The doctor had no opportunity to thank Mr Tawse for these rarities, or there is a probability he would have done so; but strange and curious as they were, the bestowing of them showed that the heart of the schoolmaster had relented and improved a great deal.

Cockie Cheeper, too, shared the lavish benevolence of the schoolmaster before he took his final departure, and was presented with a considerable portion of the before-referred-to mortcloth, from which ghostly article the giver's idea had been, that an excellent fiddle-bag could be manufactured. Cockie was a little elevated at having been favoured with the extensive present, as he was not quite inaccessible to thinking himself honoured at times; but his explanations of what he supposed had led to the valuable gift falling to his lot were elucidating and explanatory enough. It appeared, according to Cockie's statement, that he had been "rinnin' the broose," or out with a bottle of whisky to meet Willie and the marriage-party, on their return from the minister's after the ceremony, and that by the way

he had met Mr Tawse, who had most unexpectedly stopped him and spoken. Cockie, indeed, said he "never saw him sae deevilish frank and ceevil in his life, and seldom onybody mair sae;" and though he "hardly likit tae offer him a glass, he did it wi' a 'pology." This rashness it appeared had not been taken amiss, as Mr Tawse had "snappit up twa o' the whackin'est stiff wheeps that ever swam round a tongue root, an' said guid-nicht as freendly as if he had been speakin' tae a gentleman." Peculiar and trifling as this act of familiarity was, it had at the time elevated Mr Tawse greatly in Cockie's opinion, though he got down again shortly, as Cockie "didna ken hoo the deevil it was, but he gaed past him twa-ree times after't, and ne'er let on he saw him." But on another occasion, when Cockie was not looking at him, he drew up as pleasantly as the first time; and Cockie, on this recurrence of the "honour," "was clean fixed, and couldna play his meanin' at a', and had maist thocht it was ceevilness, till he saw him glowrin' awfu' keen and earnest at his coat pouch, when he mindit that there was a bottle-neck stickin' oot o't." Suspecting then what would be the cause of the politeness, Cockie had nothing for it, as Mr Tawse had been misled by "presumptive evidence," but just to let him know he was disappointed in his conjecture; so he drew the bottle from his pocket, and told him plainly as he did so, that it was "only a wee pickle vernish for his fiddle!" According to Cockie's description, when Mr Tawse heard this, he "tried tae laugh; but his teeth gaed snack thegither wi' a skelp like a slippit fiddle-brig, and he set aff grumphin' and lookin' like's he had been findin' the smell o' a brunt besom, or haen ane hingin' frae his nose." Cockie thought the old cloth had been given as an ingenious hint to keep dark upon these points; but he said he "didna gie a bass string wi' the wire worn aff't for him, noo that he's oot o' the gaet;" and besides, he was even bold enough to hint something about a broken

finger-board fully representing the maximum of his concern, although Mr Tawse had heard his remarks. But Cockie surely must have had a "bit dram" when talking so largely!

The solitary dissatisfied individual, to whom we have just referred as not having been pleased with the revelations and overturns through the agency of "THE MISTY MORNING," is no other than our friend Charlie Spades. He never got thoroughly reconciled to the belief that Katie had cast up in a right and proper way, after he had looked for a different result; or, as he hinted his disapproval in his own words, "though Mr Gobbler's job was aye better nor naething, yet a thing that a body lays their account for, and has every raisen for expeckin', it's no in natur to ettle them to be a'thegither pleased, if they're disappointed." This again was translated and interpreted by his intelligent assistant Neddy, to whom he mentioned his cause of grumbling while engaged with Mr Gobbler's last resting-place. Neddy, after a lengthy consideration, got out, "That's like—she—should—have—been—dead like—I oonderstand."

THE END.

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